

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

LITHUANIAN REPORT ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF
EDUCATION

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1. THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY: A REVIEW

1.1. Key reforms and innovations in education

Organization, structure and management of the education system

With the implementation of the education reform and the adoption of relevant amendments to the Law on Education (2003), the education system itself as well as the principles and procedures of management and funding were updated. Within this context, the regulation of education provision was expanded and made more concrete, broader support to both education providers and learners was scheduled, a more extensive network of educational self-governance institutions was formed, with their competences extended.

As provided by the *Law on Education* (2003), the educational system of Lithuania is comprised of:

- 1) formal education (primary, basic and secondary education, vocational training as well as post-secondary and higher studies);
- 2) non-formal education (pre-school, pre-primary and other non-formal education of children and adults);
- 3) self- education;
- 4) assistance to the learner (informational, psychological, social-pedagogical, special-pedagogical and special assistance and healthcare in schools);
- 5) assistance to the teacher and the school (assistance in the form of information, consultations, in-service education and other forms of assistance).

As stipulated in the *Law on Education*, the purpose of education management is to ensure the quality of implementation of State education policy through administrative means, including monitoring, planning, delegation and supervision of powers and responsibilities. The law provides for state, municipal and non-state education management sectors (certain education management powers may be delegated to education self-governance bodies).

As provided by the *Law on Education* (2003), the entities engaged in education management are:

- 1) the *Seimas*;

- 2) the Government, Ministry of Education and Science, other ministries, government institutions, County governors;
- 3) municipal institutions;
- 4) the founder of a school;
- 5) the principal of a school

Levels of education: goals and objectives

Levels of education

The Lithuanian education system encompasses seven levels (see table 1).

Table 1. Levels of Education

Levels of education according to the National Classification of Education of Lithuania	Levels of education according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997)
Level 0 Pre-primary education (<i>pre-primary and pre-school education programmes</i>)	Level 0 Pre - primary education
Level 1 Primary education (<i>primary education programmes</i>)	Level 1 Primary education First stage of basic education
Level 2 Basic education (<i>basic education and stage I of basic vocational training programmes</i>)	Level 2 Lower Secondary education Second stage of basic education
Level 3 Secondary education (<i>secondary education and stage 2 and 3 of basic vocational training programmes</i>)	Level 3 (Upper) Secondary education
Level 4 Post – secondary non-tertiary education (<i>stage 4 of basic vocational training programmes</i>)	Level 4 Post-Secondary non- tertiary education
Level 5 Advanced vocational education and training (<i>programmes of advanced vocational education and training and training programmes*</i>)	Level 5 First stage of tertiary education, (not leading directly to an advanced research qualification)

* Admission to advanced vocational study programmes was provided until 2003-2004 academic year. Advanced vocational schools which were not integrated into colleges operated until August 2006.

Level 6 Higher education (<i>university programmes of basic professional studies, Bachelor and Master degree programmes, special professional studies programmes, integrated studies programmes, residency studies programmes, non-university study programmes</i>)	
Level 7 Doctoral studies (<i>doctoral study programmes</i>) Postgraduate Art Studies	Level 6 Second stage of tertiary education, (leading to an advanced research qualification)

Diferent levels of education provide different education programmes.

According to the education programmes provided, their classification is twofold: **vertical**, indicating the hierarchical level of the programme (pre-school - pre-primary – primary – basic – secondary – post-secondary – higher) and **horizontal**, indicating the field of the programme (speciality or specialization). Further, the hierarchical classification of programmes and their objectives are presented.

Level 0 (ISCED 0)

1. **Pre-school education.** Its purpose is to facilitate satisfaction of the child’s natural, cultural as well as ethnic, social and cognitive needs. The programmes are designed for children aged from 3 to 6 years.
2. **Pre-school education for children with special needs.** It is provided for children from 3 years of age.
3. **Pre-primary education.** Its purpose is to help a child prepare for learning according to the primary education curriculum. The provision of pre-primary education to a child commences on the calendar year in which a child turns 6 years of age. Pre-primary education may begin earlier upon the parents' request if the child has achieved the maturity required for this kind of education, but not before he reaches the age of 5.

Level 1 (ISCED 1)

1. **Primary education.** The purpose of primary education is to help a child acquire the basics of moral, cultural and social maturity and elementary literacy, as well as to assist them in preparing to continue education according to the basic education curriculum. The age of the children following Level 1 curriculum is from 6/7 to 10/11 years. The duration of the programme is four years, which comprises one educational concentre

consisting of two sub-concentres, the duration of each is two years. Upon completion of the programme, learners acquire primary education.

2. Primary education for learners with special needs. Upon recommendation of the special education commission and/or pedagogical psychological service of the school, special needs learners can be taught according to the Modified Primary Education Programme, the Adapted Primary Education Programme or the Special Primary Education Programme.

A modified programme is an amended or altered general education (primary or basic) curriculum catering for special needs persons, allowing them to access national education standards. Modified programmes are designed for special needs learners whose needs are addressed within an ordinary mainstream class settings. Modifications can consist of the necessary adjustment of the teaching methods to cover the particular needs of such learners, the appropriate pedagogical, psychological or some other kind of specific assistance to them, provision of assistive equipment, technology and resources designed for education, and adaptation of the learning environment. Modified subject programmes are drawn up by subject teachers upon the recommendations of specialists.

The adapted primary education subject programme is designed for special needs learners in regular education classes who, because of their special needs, cannot acquire the same competencies as their classmates. This programme is developed by adjusting the subject programme/s, reducing the curriculum content and simplifying it/them, taking account of the individual competencies and special needs of the learners. The necessary special pedagogical, psychological, or some other kind of assistance and assistive technology are provided to the learners and the learning environment is adjusted to their particular needs. The learners, having acquired, upon completion of the programme, various competencies instrumental in their future life and future education, do not attain primary education standards.

The special primary education programme is designed for 6/7 – 10/11 year old learners with intellectual impairment and those with complex disorders (where intellectual impairment is part of the whole complex of disorders) who are taught in special classes of mainstream schools. Individualized curricula are developed for them, taking into account the character, the degree of the intellectual/complex disorders and the specific needs as well as the capabilities of the learners. The special primary education curricula significantly differ from the prescribed primary education curriculum. Upon completion of the Special Programme, special needs learners do not acquire primary education. However, they

develop the basics of moral, cultural, social maturity and the basics of general literacy corresponding to their competence, and get prepared to follow the basic special education programme.

Level 2 (ISCED 2)

- 1. Basic education.** The purpose of basic education is to provide an individual with the basics of moral, socio-cultural and civic maturity, general literacy and the basics of technological literacy, to cultivate national consciousness, to develop an ability to make decisions and choices and to continue learning. Basic education is provided to learners who have attained the primary level of education. The programme, whose duration is 6 years, encompasses two concentres: 5-8 classes and 9-10 classes. Upon completion of the programme, learners obtain basic education.
- 2. Alternative education.** It is designed to meet the needs of learners who are not succeeding in the traditional school setting. Alternative education is provided to 12-16 year old adolescents.
- 3. General basic education for learners with special needs.** Upon recommendation of the special education commission and/or pedagogical psychological service of the school, special needs learners in regular mainstream classes can follow a modified basic education subject programme, an adapted basic education subject programme or a special basic education programme.

In providing the modified basic education subject programme/s, the scope of the curriculum is not reduced, and with the necessary adjustment of the teaching methods to cover the particular needs of such learners, the appropriate pedagogical, psychological or some other kind of specific assistance rendered to them, provision of assistive technology, equipment and resources designed for education, and adaptation of the learning environment, they acquire the same competencies as their classmates. Upon completion, the special needs learners attain basic education standards.

The adapted basic education subject programme, adjusted to the abilities and the realistic learning level of special needs persons, does not meet the national basic education standards. It is designed for the learners with special needs who are fully integrated in mainstream schools (general education classes).

Ensuring the continuity of the adapted primary education programme and taking into account the realistic level of the achievements of the learner, the subject teacher, in

consultation with the school special pedagogue or speech therapist (or, if the latter are unavailable, pedagogical psychological service specialists) prepares the adapted basic education programme and the thematic plan. This programme is developed by adapting the general syllabi to the individual abilities and specific educational needs of the learner. The duration of the programme is 6 years, or 8 years if it is provided by special schools to deaf or hard of hearing learners.

Upon completion of the adapted basic education subject programme, learners do not attain basic education. However, they acquire general literacy, the basics of personal, socio-cultural and civic maturity as well as the basics of technological literacy, and get prepared for further schooling under secondary or vocational education programmes.

Learners with severe or profound learning difficulties in special or remedial classes follow the Special Basic Education Programme, which is designed for learners with intellectual or complex impairments (where an intellectual impairment is part of the whole complex of impairments). The duration of the programme is 6 years.

The content of the Special Basic Education Programme differs from that of the prescribed Basic Education Programme: the number of obligatory lessons is smaller, the curriculum does not include physics, chemistry and foreign languages. Upon completion of this programme, learners do not obtain basic education. However, they acquire competencies corresponding to their abilities, the basic literacy in socio-cultural and subject areas, as well as the basics of civic maturity, and get prepared to continue schooling according to vocational training or work skills development programmes.

4. Primary vocational education and training granting basic education and a professional qualification. The typical duration of the programme is 3 years. Persons are admitted to the programme upon reaching the age of 14 years. Upon completing the programme, students obtain basic education and a professional qualification.

5. Primary vocational education and training granting only a professional qualification. The duration of the programme is 1 – 2 years, upon completion of which a professional qualification is obtained.

6. Primary vocational education and training of special needs persons granting a level 1 professional qualification. The typical duration of the programme is 3 years. The admission age is 14 years. Completion of the programme leads to a professional qualification.

7. General education of adults. It is provided to persons who have reached the age of 18.

Level 3 (ISCED 3)

1. Secondary education. The programme is designed for persons who want to gain secondary education, to prepare for further schooling under a higher level programmes, or to obtain a professional qualification. It is provided to persons with a basic education. The duration of the programme is two years with the focus on profiling of instruction and on differentiation of the content. Structurally, the curriculum consists of two parts: the core of general education, obligatory to all students regardless of the type of school providing secondary education and the selective part of the curriculum, which depends on the profile chosen. Learners are free to choose one out of the four available profiles: humanities, science, technology (delivered at vocational schools), and art (art gymnasias, the National Art School, and conservatoires). Upon completing the secondary school curriculum and passing *Matura* examinations, students gain secondary education.

Special needs persons may follow the Adapted Secondary Education Programme. It is a two-year programme that does not meet the national secondary education standards and is adjusted to the abilities and the realistic learning level of special needs persons studying in ordinary classes of mainstream general education schools. To pursue the adapted secondary education programme, completion of the adapted basic education programme is obligatory. Special needs learners are not required to take the extended subject course, neither are they required, upon completing this two-year programme, to take the *Matura* examinations.

Delivery of the adapted secondary education programme can be organized by general general education and vocational training schools providing secondary education programmes. Special needs persons over 21 years of age can access the adapted secondary education programme at schools delivering adult secondary education programmes.

Upon completing the Adapted Secondary Education Programme, learners do not gain secondary education. However, they acquire competencies corresponding to their abilities: skills and knowledge in various subject areas, they achieve physical and civic maturity and get prepared to continue schooling in level 2 or level 3 vocational education and training programmes to access which it is sufficient to have the knowledge and skills of the adapted syllabus(es) of general education subject(s) if the learners' achievements make it possible for them to continue schooling and obtain a qualification.

2. Primary vocational education and training Level 3 programmes leading to secondary education and a professional qualification. It is open to persons who have attained basic education. The typical duration of the programme is three years. Having successfully completed it, learners are awarded a secondary education certificate and a professional qualification.

3. Basic vocational education and training Level 2 programmes leading to a professional qualification only. It is provided to persons who have attained basic education. The typical duration of the programme is two years. On successful completion of the programme, learners are awarded a professional qualification.

4. Primary vocational education and training of special needs persons according to Level 2 programmes

5. Adult general secondary education. Learners can access it when they reach the age of 18 years.

Level 4 (ISCED 4)

1. Primary vocational education and training according to Level 4 vocational training programmes. It is provided to learners who have acquired secondary education or have covered the general secondary education curriculum. The duration of the programme is 1-2 years. Successful completion of the programme leads to a professional qualification.

2. Special needs persons' primary vocational education and training under Level 4 vocational education and training programmes. The typical duration of the programme is three years and it is provided to persons of 18 years of age and over.

Level 5 (ISCED 5)

Post-secondary studies.*. The purpose of post-secondary studies is to assist a person in attaining a post-secondary education level and in acquiring a particular qualification, also in preparing for participation in the labour market and the civic life. They are designed for persons with a secondary education who are able to study independently. A post-secondary level of education and a qualification are obtained upon successful completion of the programme and defence of the final project and (or) passing final examinations.

Level 6 (ISCED 5)

Higher education

1. Basic studies. The basic studies programmes are designed to gain theoretical basics in a particular study area and to develop professional skills necessary for independent work. Upon successful completion of the basic university studies programme, students are awarded a professional qualification and (or) the Bachelor's degree. The completion of a non-university basic studies programme leads to a professional qualification and (or) a professional Bachelor's degree .

2. Masters' degree studies. The Master's degree study programmes are intended to help a student prepare for independent scientific or artistic work, or some other type of work that requires deeper knowledge and skills. These study programmes can be pursued only by those students who have obtained the Bachelor's qualification degree. The duration of Master's degree programmes is 1.5–2 academic years. Upon completion of the programme, students are awarded a Master's qualification degree.

3. Special professional studies. The special professional study programmes are designed to help students prepare for a working career that requires special practical skills and competencies. They can be pursued by persons who have successfully completed their basic studies. Completion of special professional studies leads to a professional qualification in a corresponding study area.

4. Integrated studies. The integrated study programmes, where the first and the second level of university programmes are linked in uninterrupted succession,

* Admission to advanced vocational study programmes was provided until the 2003-2004 academic year. Advanced vocational schools which were not integrated into colleges operated until August 2006

are designed to obtain a Master's degree or a specific professional qualification.

5. Non-university studies. These are one-level, practice-oriented professional studies at a higher education establishment, which create the necessary conditions to obtain a professional qualification based on applied research and (or) applied science activities.

Level 7 (ISCED 6)

1. Post graduate residency studies. They are intended for those who have acquired professional qualifications in the areas of study defined by the Government to prepare for taking on independent practical activities.

2. **Doctoral studies.** The purpose of doctoral programmes is to develop scientific staff. Participants follow individual doctoral programme curricula upon completion of which they submit and defend a doctoral thesis.
3. **Post graduate art studies.** The programmes are devoted to the preparation of academic staff for higher education art schools and to specialization and further development of artists. Upon completion of the programme, participants submit and defend their final artistic project.

Curriculum policy, education content and teaching strategies

Implementing the provisions of the *National Education Strategy 2003-2012*, which envisage developing a system for updating the content of education and relating it to new competencies of an individual, as well as the provisions of the *Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012*, the *Strategy of the Development, Assessment, Updating and Implementation of General Education Curriculum 2007-2012* was approved.

The **purpose** of this strategy is to define the goals and principles of the curriculum development process, the functions and responsibilities of education levels, to establish priorities, measures and the implementation indicators.

The **goal** of the curriculum development process, as defined in the Strategy, is to adjust the education content so as to enable each and every learner to mature and develop, in accordance with their needs and abilities, as an individual, to forge their national identity, to acquire competencies necessary for their further learning and a meaningful active life in our contemporary society.

The Strategy has formulated the following curriculum development process **objectives**:

- To develop an integral system to assess the education content (learners' achievements, the education process, documents related to education content, textbooks and other teaching aids) that would help to identify the areas that need improvement;

- To update, in accordance with the assessment conclusions and the proposals of social partners, the documents, textbooks and other teaching aids related to the curriculum development process, as well as initial and in-service teacher training programmes;
- To reinforce the formation and implementation of curricula with financial, organizational and methodological assistance to the school and teachers;
- To define the functions of education governance levels and coordinate their actions in the curriculum development process.

The curriculum development process – its formation, implementation, assessment and updating – is based on the following **principles**:

- Provision for each pupil of a possibility to develop a system of values and to attain personal maturity as well as to acquire competencies necessary for life in contemporary society that constitute a whole of skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes;
- Differentiation and individualization of school curriculum adjusting it to pupils' age, the experience gained, their needs, level of competence and learning styles;
- Consolidation of the internal integration of school curriculum, its relation with life, labour market and cultural processes;
- Decentralization of the curriculum development process, whereby decisions concerning adjustment of school curriculum to the specific needs of pupils are taken by the school and the teacher, based on the observation of the pupil and the documents regulating school curricula;
- Curriculum updating is based on the information on the assessment of the education process and learners' progress and achievements, on the conclusions of the periodically conducted curriculum development assessment, and on broad agreements with social partners;
- The implementation of curricular innovations is based on financial, methodological and organizational resources, which open up a possibility for teachers to properly prepare for their work and to create the necessary learning environment.

The Strategy defines the missions of pre-school, primary, basic and secondary school curriculum development process. The curriculum development process ensures that:

- Pre-school education is competence-oriented, children are prepared for school and teaching is delivered through games and various activities;
- Primary education develops in pupils knowledge and understanding of the world and the basics of key competencies, and links learning with issues important to pupils and with their natural environment;
- Basic education creates opportunities for everybody to gain key competencies necessary for continued learning throughout life and to strive for better learning outcomes within their competence. Particular attention is to be paid to shaping learners' values and positive behaviour as well as to the practical application of the knowledge and competencies acquired. In the third curriculum concentre (9-10 forms) learners are to be given a possibility to pick and choose subjects that interest them from all areas of general education programmes, to try themselves in different fields of activities and to familiarize themselves with real work places;
- In secondary education, pupils, following individual learning plans, build up and deepen their knowledge, develop their skills and competencies in the selected areas, get prepared for *matura* examinations and their further schooling in higher or vocational education establishments.

In upgrading school curriculum, the following objectives are pursued:

- To link the measures of curriculum development strategy with the *Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012*, the *Lithuanian Information Society Development Strategy*, the *Strategy of the Introduction of Information and Communication Technologies into Lithuanian Education 2008 – 2012*, the *Vocational Guidance Strategy*, the *Long-term Civic and National Education Strategy*.
- In the curriculum development process, to draw upon the school internal and external assessment results and make use of the proposals coming from parents, other persons, public organizations, and government institutions;
- To use the EU structural funds support for updating school curriculum: to adjust it to diverse needs of learners, to upgrade teachers' professional competence and to equip schools with modern teaching/learning aids.

- To draw upon the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) and to adjust school curriculum in developing personal competencies of an individual.
- To make use, in evaluating the quality of education content in our country, of the opportunity to participate in international learner achievement surveys
- To promote more active involvement of higher education academic staff, doctoral and Master's study programme participants in curriculum assessment and updating work.

The General Education Curriculum DEvelopment, Assessment, Updating and Implementation Strategy 2007-2012 emphasizes the following **priorities for the years 2007-2012:**

- To develop key competencies-oriented curriculum, with an emphasis on citizenship education and development of learning, entrepreneurship, numeracy skills so that upon completing the basic school programme, pupils are ready to meet the challenges of living in contemporary society.
- To assure alignment between education and assessment objectives (e.g. developed and assessed competencies); to place more importance on pupils' assessment in the curriculum development process and strengthen the relation with external assessment; to assure that on completion of basic and secondary education, part of the final assessment is based on project-type work or other personal pieces of work produced by pupils.
- To devote special attention to teachers' knowledge of their pupils, to individualization and differentiation of education, which would allow adjustment of the curriculum content to accommodate a diversity of individual needs, learning styles and capabilities of learners.
- To increase the range of choices for 14-19 year-old learners enabling them to ascertain their needs and interests and take decisions concerning continuing education and professional career; to create the necessary conditions for pupils of this age range to familiarize themselves with different professions in simulated or real work places, in meetings with representatives of various professions and through all kinds of information and consultation sources.
- To upgrade teachers' qualification in the following fields: development of pupils' competencies, individualization of education and differentiation of curriculum content, learning-oriented assessment, teaching planning and reflection. In carrying out school

and teacher evaluation, special attention is to be devoted to curriculum assessment; the information on the assessment received should help to improve the education content so that it responds to the needs of pupils and society at large.

- To increase provision of up-to-date teaching aids to schools and the use of information and communication technologies in curriculum development, with a view to improving access to quality teaching/learning aids, which would help teachers to more successfully involve pupils in an active learning process.

Table 2. Projects carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science devoted to updating curriculum content

<i>National projects:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bi-lingual education project (2001–2004) ● Assessment of pupils’ progress and achievements in the process of education (2004–2006) ● Implementation of draft project on primary education programme (2005–2007) ● A breakthrough in the implementation of IT in grades 7-8 (2006–2008) ● Development of a learning schools network (2006–2008)
<i>EU SF projects:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upgrading primary and special education teachers’ competencies in employing ICT and innovative teaching/learning methods (2006–2008) ● Development and implementation of ICT-based school curricula following the example of the integrated natural sciences course for 5-6 grade learners (2006–2008) ● Projects devoted to the development of a new system for in-service training etc.
<i>EU SF National project:</i>
Increasing the possibilities of 14-19 year old learners to choose a learning field (2005–2007)
<i>Nordic and Baltic countries’ project:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School for all (2000–2004)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

The quality of education content is assessed on the basis of : the results of national and international surveys on pupils’ progress and achievements; school-added value; examination results; pupils’ progress and achievements in the education process; internal and external audit conclusions; expert evaluation conclusions.

Since 2002, **national studies on pupils’ achievements** have been carried out annually. The surveys provide to education managers relevant information on pupils’ achievement levels and

the main influencing factors. They analyse the achievement levels of pupils in grades 4, 6, 8 ir 10, as well as the work of teachers in the fields of education in which pupils under survey participate. The surveys look into the following fields: Lithuanian as a mother tongue, mathematics, natural science education, and societal education.

Lithuania has participated in **international studies** on education since 1995. They aim at assessing the achievement levels of pupils in the country and the influencing factors, and at comparing them with those of other participating countries. The data collected show to what extent the country's education system corresponds with global trends in education. In Lithuania, international studies are administered by the Pupils Achievements Study Sector at the National Examination Centre and the Information Technologies Centre.

Lithuania participates in the following international studies:

IEA TIMSS – Trends in international mathematics and science study;

IEA PIRLS – Progress in international reading literacy study;

IEA ICCS – International civic and citizenship study;

IEA SITES – Second Information Technology in Education Study;

OECD PISA – Programme for international student assessment ;

OECD TALIS – Survey of teachers, teaching and learning;

ESPAD – The European school survey project on alcohol and other drugs.

Legal basis of education (new legal acts)

In implementing the education policy and taking account of the changing political, economic and social situation, amendments to legal acts have been adopted and several new legal acts have been enacted. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has passed the following laws and resolutions:

Law on the Amendment of the Law on Science and Studies (2002); Law Amending the Law on Education (2003); Provisions for the National Education Strategy 2003–2012 (2003); Long-term civic and citizenship education programmes (2006); Law Amending the Law on Vocational Education and Training (2007); Law on Minimum and Medium Supervision of the Child (2007); Concept of the State Policy on Child Welfare (2007) and other legal acts regulating various fields of education.

The objectives and main characteristics of the current and prospective reforms

The second stage of the education reform whereby special attention was devoted to modernization of education, quality enhancement, creation of conditions for social-pedagogical

education, and strengthening of links between different level educational institutions, was over in 2001.

In 2002 a reform of education funding was started, with consistent introduction of the allocation of funds principle ‘money follows the pupil’. This principle has already been implemented in funding general education schools; it is also applied in vocational training and pre-primary education. It has been recommended that as of 2007, the principle be applied in non-formal and pre-school education.

In 2002 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania endorsed the *Long-term Development Strategy of the State*, in which three priorities are identified: knowledge society, secure society, and competitive economy. Education occupies a fundamental role in the long-term development strategy.

In 2003 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted a new edition of the *Law on Education* and endorsed the *Provisions for the National Education Strategy 2003–2012*.

The *Provisions for the National Education Strategy 2003–2012* marked the beginning of the 3d stage of the Lithuanian education reform. The document outlines the education development objectives and implementation measures and defines the key quantitative and qualitative targets that will be taken into consideration in evaluating education development in Lithuania in the period of 2003-2012.

The education strategy seeks to achieve the following **key aims** of education development:

- To develop an efficient and consistent education system which is based on responsible management, targeted funding and rational use of resources;
- To develop an an accessible to all system of continuing education that guarantees life-long learning and social justice;
- To ensure the quality of education that is in line with the needs of an individual living in an open civil society under market economy conditions.

To achieve the above key aims of the education development strategy, five **implementation areas** have been identified: improvement of governance; improvement of infrastructure; improvement of support; improvement of education content, and improvement of staff.

The second and the third stages of the Lithuanian education reform are linked by the 2002-2006 **School Improvement Programme**, the largest general education schools investment project ever since Lithuania regained its independence. The programme aimed at enhancing the achievement of 5–10 grade learners through modernizing general education and ensuring effective and rational use of funds. The programme comprised four integrated

components: improvement of teaching and learning conditions in basic education schools, development of education quality management system, energy saving in schools, and revision of the school network. Even though greatest attention was devoted to basic education, the programme has had its influence on the whole system of education.

In 2004, by the order of the ministers of education and the minister of social security and labour the *Life-long learning Strategy and the Action Plan for its Implementation* were approved. The strategy and the action plan covered the spheres of education in Lithuania calling for major changes – vocational training and adult education (a new life-long learning assurance strategy is under way. Please see text below).

In 2007 the *Law Amending the Law on Vocational Training and Education* was passed establishing the following **objectives of the vocational training and education system**:

- To help an individual to attain a qualification and competencies corresponding to the contemporary level of science, technology, economy and culture that facilitate his involvement and ability to compete in the changing labour market and guarantee the progress of economy, competitiveness in international markets and sustainable development of the country.
- To create the necessary conditions enabling persons of diverse needs and competencies to access life-long learning, to upgrade and change their qualifications;
- To assure access to and the quality of vocational education and training;
- To assure conformity of qualifications to the needs of economy and impartiality in the evaluation of competencies and in the award and recognition of qualifications;
- To ensure effective functioning of the vocational guidance system.

In 2007, the *Law on Minimum and Medium Supervision of the Child* was adopted. The purpose of the law is to develop a system of minimum and medium supervision measures, which safeguards the rights of the child, meets his lawful interests and the security needs of society and which is devoted to the socialization and education of children with behavioural problems who need pedagogical, psychological, special pedagogical, informational or some other kind of assistance. The law establishes the principles and measures of minimum and medium supervision, the way they can be applied, extended, revised or repealed as well as the key provisions of the application of medium supervision measures in children's socialization centres.

At present, a new **Draft Law on Education** is under way. The document is based on the 2006-2008 programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, one of the provisions of which was to prepare a draft law amending the Law on Education integrating into it provisions

on the education of special needs pupils. Education of special needs pupils is an integral part of the system of education and it must be covered by one and the same law governing education of all the citizens of Lithuania. Following this principle, relevant provisions of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Special Education have been transposed into the draft law. Certain provisions of the present law on education have also been revised with a view to ensuring smoother functioning of the system of education, implementing effective governance of educational institutions and legal relations in the education activities, and consolidating the changes taking place in the community and the system of education.

The key objectives pursued by the Law are:

- To integrate the provisions of the Law on Special Education into the Law on Education;
- To legalize the diversity of schools and the new types of general education schools;
- To extend the list of persons who can be granted the right to work as teachers;
- To streamline the planning and coordination of education on different levels of governance;
- To harmonize the provisions of the Law on Education with other laws.

In order to implement *The Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* and the programme for their implementation, as well as the provisions of *The Law on Non-Formal Education*, the *Law on Vocational Education and Training*, the *Law on Higher Education*, the *European Commission's 2006 Communication on Adult Learning: It Is Never Too Late to Learn* (Brussels, 23.10.2006 COM (2006) 614), the *European Commission's Action Plan on Adult Education: It is Always a Good Time to Learn* (Brussels, Com (2007) 558) and other legal acts regulating the sphere of education and reflecting the goals and measures of life-long learning, a new *Draft Strategy on Ensuring Life-long Education* has been developed.

The goal of the draft strategy is to plan and to define the directions and the implementation measures of life-long education development, with the main emphasis on vocational education and training and on continuous education of adults.

The Strategy pursues the following **objectives**:

- To develop a comprehensive, integral and cost-effective system of life-long education which would meet the strategic goals of the state and address the needs of an individual in the context of globalization;
- To create the necessary conditions for persons of diverse needs and competencies to attain, upgrade and change their qualifications and competencies facilitating their

lodgment in the labour market, ensuring the progress, competitiveness and sustainability of economy;

- To ensure compatibility of qualifications with the demands of economy, as well as their transparency, comparability, continuity of learning, and occupational and territorial mobility by designing a common and transparent qualifications system covering all levels of qualifications;
- To improve participants' quality of life and facilitate their integration into contemporary society, to develop an even distribution throughout the country of non-formal, non-vocational adult education in adult education settings of different types;
- To give adults "a second chance" to attain general education and to develop general competencies; to increase access to life-long learning services for various social groups;
- To create conditions for the staff working with adult learners to upgrade their qualifications and to ensure high quality provision of adult education;
- To modernize, with the EU support, the regional infrastructure of institutions offering life-long learning services with a view to providing equally high quality services in various types of institutions throughout the country;
- To strike a balance in funding various fields of continuous and adult learning in order to respond to the diverse educational needs of the residents of the country and to increase funding in the areas where it is most necessary;
- To enhance information about access to life-long education provision on the national and the regional levels; to strengthen the motivation for continuous learning by offering a wider range of pathways, and to update the progress monitoring forms.

1.2. Key policy measures, achievements and lessons learnt

Access to education (activities and measures devoted to reintegration of children, adolescents and adults into mainstream education)

Access to education is granted on every level of the education system of Lithuania.

According to the *Law on Education (2003)*, each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania, also each alien having a permanent or provisional residence permit for the Republic of Lithuania, has the right to study, attain an education level and a qualification. A learner who has suspended his studies may resume them at the same or at a different school as prescribed contractually or in legislative acts. A person who has attained a basic or secondary education level and wishes to supplement his preparation for further studies is provided an opportunity to repeat general

education subjects of his choice and to repeat examinations, as prescribed by the Minister of Education and Science.

The *Law on Education* (2003) ensures that special needs persons have access to education. Upon the request of the parents (foster parents, guardians) of a child with special needs, conditions are ensured for the child to study in a fully or partially integrated form at a pre-school and general education school located as close as possible to his home or at a school implementing a special education program. The child's special educational needs are assessed by the school's special education commission or the pedagogical-psychological service, which also recommend the form of education. The school is chosen upon the recommendation of the pedagogical-psychological service. Vocational, post-secondary schools and schools of higher education establish a supplementary preferential enrolment procedure for persons with special needs. Accessibility of education to persons with special needs is ensured by adapting the school's environment, by providing psychological, special-pedagogical and special assistance, by supplying such persons with assistive education technology and special teaching aids, also in other ways prescribed in law.

Persons with limited mobility are also granted access to education. Children who are unable to attend a school of general education due to an illness or a medical condition are provided the opportunity to study at a medical facility, or at home, to study independently and to sit examinations as prescribed by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education and Science.

Persons who have been temporarily deprived of freedom or whose freedom has been temporarily restricted are provided the opportunity to study at their corrective or penal institution, so that they may attain a primary, basic and secondary education level, a qualification and to study independently; such conditions are provided as prescribed by the Government or its authorised institution.

Servicepersons engaged in compulsory military service are provided with opportunities to study according to modules of general education programmes, and to participate in non-formal education programmes as prescribed by the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of National Defence, also to engage in self-education.

Accessibility of education to socially excluded children from poor families, abandoned children, children of refugees, children not attending school, unemployed persons, persons who have returned from imprisonment, persons undergoing treatment for alcohol and drug addiction as well as persons experiencing social exclusion is ensured by providing them with social services and pedagogical assistance. Accessibility of education to working persons: the

employer creates conditions for the employee to study, according to rules established by laws and other legislative acts; vocational, post-secondary schools and schools of higher education create conditions for working persons to study in various ways, including distance learning.

The *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* (2003) aim at ensuring accessibility, continuity and social justice of the education development process. The strategy stipulates equality at the starting position and socially just learning and study conditions, which enables effective education of children with diverse needs and competencies.

Pre-primary and pre-school education. One of the key principles in the organization of pre-primary education specified in the *Inventory of Pre-primary Education Organization Models* (2003) is accessibility. The document stipulates that pre-primary education is to be developed in such a way and in such forms so as to ensure that every family raising a five-year or six-year old child has access to pre-primary education services.

In 2005, the *Description of the Organization of Pre-primary Education* was approved. The provision of pre-primary education to a child commences on the calendar year when a child turns six years of age. It may begin earlier upon the parents' request and the recommendation of pedagogical psychological services and school psychologists (referred to as 'specialists' hereafter) if they recognize that the child has achieved the maturity required for pre-primary education programmes. The duration of pre-primary education is one year.

One of the key objectives specified in the *Programme for the Development of Pre-school and Pre-primary Education in 2007-2012* is to increase availability of pre-school and pre-primary education provision, in rural areas particularly. Among the implementation measures are:

- Amendments of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Education legalizing provision of pre-school education from the moment the child is born and specifying cases of compulsory pre-school education provision;
- Amendments of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Local Self-Government, legalizing pre-primary education as a substantive function of local government;
- Provision of to/from school transportation of children; if necessary, upgrading the current or preparing new legal acts;
- Development, approval and testing of new pre-school education organization models;
- Promotion of universal multifunctional centres in rural areas.

To achieve wider availability of pre-school and pre-primary education services, about 85 new pre-school and/or pre-primary education groups were opened in 2007. In 32 municipalities 94 pre-school educator positions and 32 pre-primary teacher positions were established.

Special education. Special education is regulated by the *Law on Special Education* (1998). It aims at teaching and training special needs persons, at forming and fostering their value systems at the same time recognizing their diverse competencies and capacity. Special education provision covers a wide range of educational services designed for special needs persons: early, pre-school, general, vocational, post-secondary, higher, adult and supplementary education. Special needs children commence their general education when they reach the age of 6-7. Special needs persons can access education in mainstream or special classes in all types of general education schools, in special schools or other special education establishments, and in vocational schools, where they can follow a basic vocational education programme at a level best matching their needs and competencies. Students who cannot attend school are taught at home according to the rules and procedures established by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.

Children who do not attend school. In 2005, the *Guidelines on Bringing Children Back to School* were adopted with the aim of developing a system of re-integration of children into the school system which would facilitate reducing the number of children who do not participate in compulsory education programmes. The *Guidelines* pursue the following objectives: to seek tailoring of the learning environment to the children with diverse educational needs and to develop a variety of education forms, to elaborate the support for children and families system and to increase its availability. The provision of the *Guidelines* to be highlighted is “to coordinate provision of child and family support and to increase its availability”:

- To increase availability of pedagogical and psychological assistance to special needs children by improving the material and methodological basis of municipal pedagogical psychological services, developing their infrastructure and increasing the number of specialist staff;
- To develop community social services infrastructure;
- To seek timely provision of pedagogical, social, special pedagogical, psychological and other necessary assistance to a child with learning difficulties;
- To seek early identification of reasons leading to school non-attendance and loss of motivation;

- To implement in municipalities a non-attendance prevention system.

The *Guidelines* summarize the measures that are taken to resolve the problem of non-attendance at school and to draw attention to it: the *2005-2008 Programme for Transportation of Special Needs Pupils “The Yellow Bus”* is being implemented, the *2006-2008 Programme for the Provision of Yellow Buses to Schools* has been approved, the pedagogical psychological assistance provision model is under implementation, a number of various actions are organized and research into the state of education is carried out continually.

Children and youth who are not succeeding in or have failed to adapt themselves to the traditional settings of basic or secondary education schools, or those lacking motivation of learning are granted a possibility to be re-integrated into the consecutive learning system, which is stipulated in the *Concept of Youth Schools* (2005). Youth schools seek to rekindle young people’s motivation to learn, to teach them to respond to the challenges of life and to resist the negative social influence. Academic achievement recognition system grants students who for one or another reason have suspended their studies a possibility to be re-integrated into higher education system.

Lithuania does not have a system for re-integrating children back into school which would indicate a transitional level or an institution where children not attending school could regain their ability and motivation to learn, their self confidence and social skills and where they could continue their schooling according to the programmes of compulsory education.

A *Draft Programme on Re-integration of Children Who do not Attend School* is currently (2008) being deliberated. It aims at reducing the number of children who do not participate in compulsory education programmes. A child who does not attend school is a child who in a given calendar year is 7-16 years of age and is not learning, who is not registered in Lithuanian pupil/student database. A child attending school irregularly is a child who though registered in the database, misses more than half of his classes per month without a valid excuse. According to the data submitted by municipalities, in 2003 there were 572 non-attending children, in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 there were 505, 631, 357 and 259 respectively. Information on children not attending school is accumulated by local authorities; as yet, however, there is no agreed register of the children attending school irregularly. With a view to highlighting the problem of non-attendance and finding a solution to it, additional measures are being implemented in the country:

- The Ministry of Science and Education has organized, for four years already, an action “*Going to school? I am going your way, too*” aimed at encouraging public at large to contribute to efforts of bringing not-attending or irregularly attending children back to school;

- Following the 2001-2005 programme for the establishment of social pedagogue job positions in educational establishments, a number of schools today have social pedagogues responsible for early detection, assessment and solution of issues related to children’s non-attendance, reluctance to learn, behavioural disorders, poor communication and other similar problems.

Education of gifted children. To encourage support to especially gifted children and youth, the minister of science and education endorsed the *Inventory of Criteria for Support of Gifted Children Programmes* (2005), the *Gifted Children and Youth Education Strategy* (2005), the *Gifted Children and Youth Education Programme* and the *measures for its implementation* (2006). As the analysis of the situation has shown, support for gifted children and youth has long tradition in Lithuania; however, tradition of support for academically gifted young people so far is in the stage of formation. The giftedness of children and youth are revealed by differentiating delivery of education, by maintaining the network of schools which offer non-formal education programmes for children, by organizing and supporting targeted events designed for gifted children. Every year, the most gifted pupils of Lithuania take part in the national level curriculum subject olympiads, competitions, and conferences.

National minorities and education of children from migrant families. Implementing the *National Education Strategy of 2003-2012* (2003), a number of documents important for the education of children from national minorities and migrant families have been adopted: the *Strategy for the Development of Education of the Polish Minority in Lithuania*, and *Recommendations on the Organization of Learning a National Minority Language in General Education Schools*.

Early childhood intervention (support to child development and preparation for primary education)

The *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* (2003) envisage further development of pre-school education, giving priority of access to children from families suffering from social exclusion and families at social risk. It also provides for preparation and development of pre-primary education system.

The *Programme of Pre-school and Pre-Primary Education development 2007-2012* (2007) sets out to:

- Implement new education support models for children who do not participate in preschool and pre-primary education;
- Introduce specialist positions (psychologists, social pedagogues, assistant teachers, applied physical training specialists and other relevant specialists) in preschool education establishments and pedagogical psychological services;
- Carry out targeted educational programmes designed for families who have children of preschool and pre-primary age; in educating children, increase the family responsibilities and competencies.

According to the *Law on Special Education* (1998), children with special needs from birth to 3 years of age, and their parents (foster parents, guardians) have access to special educational assistance, which is provided at home, in families, care institutions for children, health care institutions and other institutions according to the procedure established by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Children of pre-school age (from 3 to 6-7 years of age) are educated in general or special groups at mainstream pre-school establishments and in special pre-school or other special education establishments. Children with special educational needs who cannot attend pre-school educational establishments and their parents (foster parents, guardians) have access to special pedagogical services, which are provided at the child's home in accordance with the procedure established by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health.

In 2003 the *Rules and Procedures on the Provision of Educational Assistance to 5-6 Year-Old Children not Attending Pre-school Establishments* was endorsed with a view to creating an opportunity for children to attain the maturity necessary for school. The document identifies the following fields of assistance:

- Provision of counselling to parents, offered by a pre-school education pedagogue or a social pedagogue, is designed to increase the socialization and competencies of the child, which would ensure a successful start in school and the effectiveness of education.
- Psychologists' work with individual children and counselling of their parents (foster parents, guardians) with a view to helping the child deal with his/her psychological problems and assess the level of maturity;
- Special pedagogues' work with individual children and counselling of their parents, designed to increase the effectiveness of special needs education.

Assistance is provided:

- At schools delivering preschool, pre-primary and/or primary education programmes;
- At psychological and pedagogical-psychological services;
- At educational centres, day centres, libraries, cultural centres and other facilities which have specialists qualified to offer assistance if education is not provided in a school;
- At the child's home if so recommended by the pedagogical psychological service, following the Procedure on Provision of Special Pedagogical Assistance to pre-school children with special educational needs.

In 2004, the *Procedure of Providing Assistance to Families Raising a Prechool Child at Home* was adopted. Assistance is understood as activities of specialists that work toward enhancing the quality of child education. Assistance provision is designed to help parents (foster parents, guardians) effectively educate their preschool children. The document stipulates the following kinds of assistance:

- Institutional preschool education, which follows the preschool education curriculum, provided to children from 1 to 5 (or 6) years of age upon the recommendation of the Children's Rights Protection Service;
- Pedagogical assistance offered to parents (guardians) through delivery of non-formal adult education programmes, which aim at enhancing the competencies (knowledge) of parents (guardians), necessary in educating a preschool child.
- Psychological assistance, provided to children until they reach the age of 5/6 years, upon establishing their specific psychological problems. The problems are addressed by assistance providers in collaboration with the parents (foster parents, guardians) of the child through the necessary counselling and/or delivery of non-formal adult education programmes.
- Special pedagogical assistance, provided to children until they reach the age of 5/6 years, upon establishing their special educational needs, through individual work with the child, counselling offered to the child's parents (foster parents, guardians) and through non-formal adult education programmes;
- Social pedagogical assistance, provided to parents (foster parents, guardians) through non-formal adult education programmes.

The *Description of Preschool Education Organization Models* (2003) includes models designed for preschool education of children with special educational needs. Children with developmental disorders receive preschool education in mainstream preschool groups that are

in the closest vicinity to their home. In this way, under the guidance of a pedagogue, children with special needs acquire the skills of communication and cooperation. In the natural environment they learn from their peers certain models of behaviour, playing strategies and develop their language skills; the normally developing children learn to communicate with their peers who have different needs and abilities. All preschoolers receive regular special pedagogical assistance, which is one of the key factors that determine the child's school success. Provision of special pedagogical assistance seeks dual aims: development of problem functions and of the capabilities that the child has, as well as shaping the social adaptation and community skills.

Learning outcomes related to efforts aimed at improving achievements of learners and reducing differences

The purpose of evaluation of learning achievements, as stipulated in the *Law on Education* (2003), is to help learners check their progress, determine their achievements and, upon comparison with State standards for general education levels and/or qualification – make decisions concerning further study or occupation. Upon completion of the basic curriculum, a certificate of basic education is issued; upon completion of the secondary curriculum and upon passing the *matura* examinations, learners are awarded a *matura* attestation; completion of the post-secondary studies curriculum and successful defence of the final thesis (project) and/or passing the final examinations lead to a post-secondary diploma. Learners who have completed a part (module) of the primary, basic or secondary curricula, a special education curriculum or those who failed to pass the *matura* examinations receive a certificate attesting to their learning achievements..

In 2001, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Education Development Centre, the *Assessment of Learners' Progress and Achievements in the Process of Education* project was launched. It was aimed at developing an effective assessment system that would meet education goals and at initiating and implementing of new assessment methods. The project was run until 2003.

In 2004, the *Assessment in the Process of Education* project was started, based on the results of the *Assessment of Learners' Progress and Achievements in the Process of Education* and further developing its ideas. Its objective was: with active collaboration of teachers of participating schools and education specialists at national and regional levels, to change the culture of assessment in schools, to develop, test and implement assessment methods that would motivate learners and encourage their active learning during each lesson.

One of the objectives set out in the *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* (2003) is: “ensure the quality of education that is in line with the needs of an individual living in an open civil society under market economy conditions and the universal needs of society of the modern world. The implementation measures envisage modernization of education research and assessment; research of the status in different fields of education that is regularly contracted and carried out; consistent participation in international comparative studies of education; development of a national system of assessing pupils’ achievements with a view to improving the quality of education on the national, regional and school levels.

In 2005, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania endorsed the *Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012*, which set out the following policy-oriented indicators for the assessment of curriculum improvement:

- Percentage of learners whose reading literacy proficiency achievements is level 1 or lower according to the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD PISA) literacy scale;
- Percentage of grade 8 learners with basic or higher levels of achievement in the Lithuanian language;
- Percentage of grade 8 learners with basic or higher levels of achievement in mathematics;
- Percentage of grade 8 learners with basic or higher levels of achievement in natural sciences;
- Percentage of grade 8 learners with basic or higher levels of achievement in social sciences.

The *Programme for the Implementation of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* (2003) envisaged that in 2007 the rate of learners with basic or higher levels of achievement in the Lithuanian language, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences could be 65%, 60.8%, 71.3% and 67.5%, respectively. However, the results of the study have shown that in 2007 the rates were 44%, 44.5%, 48,5% and 48% respectively. (Comparison with the results of previous years is presented in the tables below).

Table 3. Grade 8 learners' achievements by levels*Lithuanian language*

Level	2003	2005	2007
Basic	52	45	39
Higher	5	5	5

Natural sciences

Level	2003	2005	2007
Basic	57,5	46	43,5
Higher	5,8	7,5	5

Mathematics

Level	2003	2005	2007
Basic	39,3	28	27,8
Higher	13,5	15	16,7

Social sciences

Level	2003	2005	2007
Basic	52,1	53,3	44
Higher	7,4	7,8	4

The results of the 2007 national survey on the achievements show that the level of proficiency of grade 4 and grade 8 learners in the Lithuanian language as a mother tongue and in natural sciences has not been increasing. Comparison of the 2005 and 2007 achievements in mathematics did not show any significant change in either grade 4 or grade 8 results. A certain improvement, compared to the year 2005, was achieved by grade 8 learners in the social sciences subjects. The data derived from the survey suggest that achievement levels differ depending on the locality of the school, the level of urbanization and the type of school. Among grade 4 learners, pupils of rural or small town schools demonstrated a lower degree of proficiency. The best results of grade 4 learners were achieved in kindergarten - school type educational institutions and some primary schools. The best results among grade 8 learners were achieved in gymnasium-type schools; however, the disparity between them and basic or secondary schools has been decreasing.

Also, certain differences in boys' and girls' achievements at school have been observed. The evidence suggests significant gender-based differences in the Lithuanian language achievements, where boys are lagging well behind girls. The findings of studies, carried out for several years, suggest that the gap between grade 8 boys and girls in math achievement has been narrowing.

Lithuania participates in the following studies on learners' academic achievements conducted by IEA (*International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement*) and OECD:

- TIMSS (IEA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), since 1995;
- PIRLS (IEA, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), since 2001;

- PISA (the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment), since 2006.

The 2006 PISA survey in Lithuania was carried out among 4746 15-year-olds from 197 schools. Its primary focus was on natural sciences, where Lithuanian scored 488 points (the international score being 500 points), with less attention devoted to mathematics and reading performance. The findings of the survey revealed that in natural sciences boys outperformed girls. The gap is small, only 2 points, which is nevertheless statistically significant. Out of the four natural sciences areas – Earth and Space Systems, Living Systems, Physical Systems and Knowledge about Natural Sciences – Lithuanian learners have demonstrated greater proficiency in the living systems area while the level of proficiency in knowledge about natural sciences was the lowest.

In mathematics Lithuania scored 486 points (with Taiwan scoring the top 549, Finland 548 and Hong Kong 547 points). The OECD mean score is 498 points. As in many other countries, in Lithuania boys are better at mathematics than girls.

On the reading literacy scale Lithuanian 15-year-olds scored 470 points (Korea with 556 score points, was the highest performing country in reading, Finland followed second with 547 points, and Hong Kong third with 547 points). The international OECD score is 492 points. Females performed better in reading than males.

Lithuania also participated in the 2006 PIRLS, whose target population includes learners in the fourth grade of schooling. The study was aimed at measuring trends in children's reading literacy achievement and policy and practices that can influence learners' performance in reading. The survey in Lithuania involved 5000 learners from 150 schools. With its 537 points Lithuania scored 21st among 45 countries. The result is statistically significantly higher than the PIRLS international average. The mean reading score of girls was higher than that of boys. For both, performance was better when reading literary texts than informational texts. Only 1% of 4th-graders did not achieve the minimum level in reading literacy, while 5% performed at the highest level. The study data show that compared with 2001, the number of learners achieving high and the highest levels has fallen.

Table 4. Change in the share of learners achieving international levels of performance

Level	2001	2006
Highest	9	5
High	48	43
Average	85	86
Minimum	98	99

Teacher Training, Employment, Working Conditions and In-Service Training

Training of Pedagogues. The process of training pedagogues embraces university or non-university first cycle studies (including pedagogical practise period at the target school), pedagogical placement and a qualification examination.

The eligibility criterion for enrolment into university and non-university teacher training programmes is a certificate certifying attainment of secondary education. There are no restrictions concerning the age of applicants. Entrants to certain specialities are required to take additional tests.

Pedagogues are trained according to a parallel (when all the teacher training curriculum components are studied parallelly) and consecutive (when academic studies are followed by professional studies including methodology of teaching the education-related discipline, curriculum subjects or integrated courses, and practice periods at schools) model. The model of training Lithuanian teachers is characterised by the following common components of educational curriculum: studies of education sciences, academic studies of subjects and certain disciplines related to school curricula; methodology of subjects or an integrated course of studies; pedagogical /school practice period.

Pedagogues working at school and lacking professional or relevant subject-related qualification can acquire the said qualification by obtaining relevant knowledge via full-time, part-time or extramural (distance) studies. They are granted a professional qualification upon completing a relevant programme of specialised professional studies and submitting the final thesis.

Teachers' Employment. The Right to Work as a Teacher. Qualification requirements for teachers working according to programmes elaborated for pre-school, pre-primary, non-formal education of children, primary, basic, secondary, special education, as well as vocational training schools are established by the Minister of Education and Science. Minimum qualification requirements for the academic staff of higher educational institutions are set out by the Government or the institution authorised by the Government. Teachers are employed

and dismissed by Head of School in compliance with the procedure established by respective legal acts.

Pedagogues' Working Conditions, Working Time and Work Load The Government has determined that teachers working at pre-school, general education, vocational, post-secondary, higher education and supplementary education institutions, as well as psychologists and pedagogues working at health and social security institutions are entitled to 56 calendar days of vacation leave. The academic staff at higher education establishments are also granted the same duration of paid leave.

Work load norms apply to teaching load only, which, currently, is 18 contact hours per week. Teachers' maximum work load is 34 hours per week. A teacher's actual presence at school is not regulated by any norms.

A mandatory number of pedagogical work hours per position during the academic year is set by each higher education institution independently. Monthly tariff-based salaries for the academic staff at state colleges are defined on the basis of 700-740 pedagogical/teaching hours per academic year. In state universities the number of pedagogical hours can be smaller or bigger.

Working conditions meeting hygienic requirements as well as adequate and supportive workplace conditions accommodating teachers' needs are assured by the provisions embedded in the Law on Education.

Pedagogues' In-Service Training and Re-qualification. In - Service training and requalification are integral parts of pedagogue training. In Lithuania, there are four pedagogical qualification categories : a teacher, a senior teacher, a teacher-methodologist and a teacher - expert.

The types of institutions directly engaged in upgrading the qualification of pedagogues and heads of educational institutions are as follows: methodological centres within the framework of schools, municipal teacher education centres, county-level education centres with regional computer literacy centres, regional computer literacy centres, in-service training institutions established at higher education establishments (with regional computer literacy centres).

The institutions indirectly involved in delivering in - service training services are as follows: school methodological centres, childhood pedagogical centres, supplementary education centres subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as non-governmental organizations.

In-service training institutions charge a fee for the services provided. Part of the costs related to in-service training events are covered from the state or municipal budget. Besides, funds for

the upgrading of qualification are also allocated from the school budget, The absolute amount of such funding is dependent on the number of pupils at school.

Re-qualification studies are organized in both university and non-university higher education establishments, as well as in re-qualification institutions which have been granted the licence by the Ministry of Education and Science. The duration and form of re-qualification studies are related to the programme, the specificity of the programme, the capabilities of the institution conducting re-qualification services and the preparedness of the students. The duration of such studies, however, is no longer than three years.

1.3 The Role of the System of Education in Combating Poverty as well as Other Forms of Social Exclusion and Cultural Marginalisation

Among the priorities within the education policy implemented by the Republic of Lithuania is the role of education in combating poverty and other forms of social exclusion. *The provisions of the State Education Strategy of 2003–2012* affirm that one of the priority goals of education is to contribute to substantial reduction of social exclusion and poverty. Among major objectives of the strategy is the development of an accessible system of continuing education that guarantees life-long learning and social justice in education.

In order to ensure accessibility, continuity and social justice of the education development process, a number of tasks must be accomplished: to ensure equality of the starting position in education ; to build the system providing pedagogical counselling and information to the family; to develop a network of expanded pre-school education services. Access to pre-school education must first and foremost be made available for socially excluded children and children from social risk families; to set up and develop a system of universal pre-primary education; to initiate targeted pedagogical and cultural support to all social risk families with children.

The situation of pre-school education in urban and rural areas is very diverse and unfavourable to the children coming from the countryside. These differences are predetermined by the number of institutions functioning on a certain territory and various related social factors, such as unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, etc. Seeking to increase the accessibility of pre-school education, the *Procedure of Providing Education Assistance to Children Aged 5-6 Years and not Attending any Educational Establishment*, was approved in 2003. The goal of such assistance is to provide these children opportunities to achieve maturity necessary for starting school in a timely manner. In 2004, *Procedure for Providing Education Assistance to Families Raising a Pre-school Child at Home*, was approved. The Procedure determines types

of assistance, beneficiaries, suppliers, as well as the ways of organizing the provision of assistance.

During the recent years, processes related to decentralising the management, organization and curriculum development of pre-school and pre-primary education are becoming more manifest. The municipal role has been increasing in importance. However, the system of organizing educational and social services is not flexible enough to adjust to the specific needs identified by parents and the opportunities available to them. At present there is insufficient diversity of forms related to the models of organizing pre-school, pre-primary education and education assistance and a shortage of services, especially those targeted at children with special educational needs or children from migrating families and early childhood age (0-3 years of age) children. According to the findings of the survey *Education Assistance to Families with Preschool and Pre-Primary Children*, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science and carried out in 2005 by the Vilnius Pedagogical University, the Institute for Social Research and the Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information, education assistance is more accessible to children attending preschool educational institutions and their families, also to families in municipal centres than to those living in the periphery. Education assistance services are concentrated in educational institutions which have preschool and pre-primary groups. Private persons are seldom encouraged to contribute to the organization of preschool and pre-primary education and to the development of its forms. So far families have been receiving too little information and counselling. There is a lack of information on the provision of preschool and pre-primary services – this is especially true for rural areas, which makes it difficult for municipal authorities to adequately assess the needs of families.

In 2007 the Methodological Recommendations on Applying the Principle of Allocating Pre-school Education Funds per Person to Calculate the Funding for Pre-school Education Institutions Providing Pre-school Education Programmes were endorsed and municipal authorities were encouraged to rely on them in planning their budget. These methodological recommendations were drafted in order to reduce the disproportion of participation in early childhood education among municipalities; to unify the calculation of funds allocated for pre-school education applying the principle of appropriating funds for pre-school education per child; to more efficiently use the funds allocated for pre-school education; to encourage municipalities to establish a rational network of institutions providing pre-school education services.

In 2008, the *Provisions for Pupils' Register* were approved by the Order of the Minister of Education. Among other data, this register will keep a record of the children in pre-school and pre-primary education.

The Programme for Developing Pre-school and Pre-primary Education in 2007-2012 (2007) aims to reduce social exclusion and discrepancies among municipalities, to ensure the provision of flexible pre-school and pre-primary education services meeting the perspectives of long-term economic societal development, to guarantee a quality pre-school and pre-primary education, to shape the fundamentals of lifelong learning and to reduce the risk of dropping out of the process of learning.

To improve conditions for non-state schools and other education providers of pre-school and pre-primary education services, the following measures are provided for in the said programme:

- to promote private initiatives of providing pre-school and pre-primary education services;
- to provide consulting and methodological assistance (training, informative publications, etc.) to founders of non-state pre-school education establishments and to providers of pre-school education programmes.

To ensure availability of information on preschool and pre-primary education to society at large, the following measures have been planned:

- to develop informative material and carry out social promotion on pre-school and pre-primary education;
- to analyse the experience gained on providing information to the population about pre-school and pre-primary education, to fund relevant initiatives and disseminate the information about the best practices.

It should be emphasized that in pursuit of conducting preschool and pre-primary education monitoring, the following measures will be implemented:

- to establish pre-school and pre-primary education monitoring indicators for municipalities;
- to carry out three-yearly municipal-level assessments of accessibility and quality of pre-school and pre-primary education on the basis of the indicators set by the Ministry of Education and Science;

To facilitate the accessibility of pre-school and pre-primary education on the municipal level, the Ministry of Education and Science has been providing, for three years running, financial support to establish the job positions of pre-school educator and pre-primary education

pedagogue. A total amount of Lt 1 000 000 will be allocated for municipal educational institutions from the state appropriations to the Ministry of Education and Science for the year 2008 to implement the project. The financial assistance will be provided during September-December of 2008, on condition a commitment is made by municipalities to ensure sustainability of the project by funding these positions from 2009 onwards.

Another field of reducing social exclusion and cultural marginalization via educational means is educating national minorities, emigrants and immigrants.

In 2004, the *Programme on Integration of National Minorities into Lithuanian Society in 2005-2010* was approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The Programme states that Lithuania has developed a fairly consistent and comprehensive legislative framework to protect the rights of national minorities. However, the changing international status of the country – membership of the EU and NATO - provides conditions for a legal update concerning the issue of national minority rights. Legal regulations applicable in the Republic of Lithuania to citizenship, national minority rights and the use of the mother tongue should be reviewed and updated. Lithuania has created the necessary conditions for the youth of national minorities to learn the Lithuanian language ensuring, at the same time, a possibility to master their mother tongue and maintain their national identity. However, there are a number of adults in national minority communities who, because of a poor command of the state language and a low level of general education, are less ready to compete in the labour market in comparison with the representatives of the majority. Special focus should be placed on teaching Lithuanian to the most vulnerable groups of society. Increased efforts are necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable social groups have a better command of the Lithuanian language – it would help them compete on equal footing in the labour market.

Most communities of less numerous national minorities identify school as an opportunity to maintain and promote their national identity. In 2004, Minister of Education and Science and Director General of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad approved the *Concept of Saturday and Sunday Schools for National Minorities*. Currently, there are Armenian, Byelorussian, Greek, Karaite, Latvian, Polish, Roma, Roumanian, Russian, Tartar, German and Jewish Sunday (Saturday) schools functioning in Lithuania. They offer programmes in the mother tongue, national history, religion and ethnic culture.

According to the data submitted by the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, an increasing tendency has been observed in recent years of non-Lithuanian pupils enrolling in schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction. Nevertheless, schools are not yet ready to function under the

conditions of a more pronounced national diversity. An ever increasing national diversity makes it imperative to use the new opportunities of multicultural cognitive education for all pupils and to be properly prepared for a more numerous inflow of new immigrants.

In 2003, in compliance with the commitments of the Republic of Lithuania related to its membership in the European Union, pursuant to the European Council *Directive (77/486/EEC of 25.7. 1977) on the Education of the Children of Migrant Workers*, as well as on the basis of the *Law on Education* of the Republic of Lithuania and the *Law on Refugee Status*, the Minister of Education and Science signed the *Order on the Provision of Education in General Education Schools to Children of Foreigners Coming to Work or Reside in the Republic of Lithuania*. This Order established provisions for educating foreigners' children in general education schools, which had already been provided for in the General Education Plans for General Education Schools from 2003 onwards.

In executing the provision of the programme for the implementation of the national education strategy *Implementing the Education Plan for Children of Migrant Families* (2005), the Ministry of Education and Science drafted the *Procedure for Providing Educational Services to the Foreigners and the Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania Who Have Come or Returned to the Republic of Lithuania to Reside or Work, both children and adults, in Remedial Classes and Remedial Mobile Groups*. The Ministry also prepared the *Lithuanian Language Programme for Remedial Classes and Remedial Mobile Groups*. In 2006 the Ministry launched the publication *For the Lithuanian Language Teachers working in Remedial Classes and Remedial Mobile Groups*, which contained the checklists of the Lithuanian language competences equivalent to the Council of Europe common reference levels A1, A2, and B1, and methodological guidelines for teachers. In 2006, a two-part textbook of the Lithuanian language with an integrated practice handbook for pupils *My and Your Country Lithuania* was prepared for the children of foreigners arriving in Lithuania and Lithuanian children residing abroad. The textbook was published in 2007. A survey *Organization of Education for Pupils Returning Back to School in Lithuanian Schools of General Education* was conducted followed by recommendations on its improvement.

The plans for 2008 include publishing a Lithuanian language ABC book and a sociocultural education textbook designed for the children of foreigners, elaborating a Lithuanian language programme for Lithuanian schools abroad, preparing the third part of the Lithuanian language textbook *My and Your Country Lithuania*, compiling a set of methodological recommendations for teachers working with foreigners' children in Lithuania and in Lithuanian schools abroad, giving seminars for teachers working with children upon their return to Lithuania, initiating

revision and improvement of the existing distance learning programmes and elaborating new distance learning programmes. An amount of 25 Litas per pupil designed to cover the textbook costs is planned to be allocated to all Lithuanian educational institutions abroad.

In 2007, The *Strategy for the Development of National (Ethnic) Minorities Policy until 2015* was approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The Strategy pursues the goal of creating the necessary conditions for national minorities to preserve their identity.

In pursuing this goal, the following tasks were identified: 1) to support the education of national minorities; 2) to support the ambitions and endeavours of national minorities to preserve their language, customs, traditions and the tangible cultural heritage created by them.

Among the strengths within the SWOT analysis, the Strategy identifies a network of Saturday (Sunday) schools for national minorities in Lithuania. The weak part is the minorities' insufficient command of the state language and the insufficient preparedness of schools to function under the conditions of a more pronounced national diversity of school communities.

Among important Strategy implementation measures is creation of favourable conditions for national minorities to attain general education in the state language, which facilitates their participation in higher education and integration into the labour market. The existing network of pre-school education establishments and general education schools with tuition provided in the national minority language allow national minorities to preserve and maintain their national/ethnic identity.

The following goals of the Strategy are particularly noteworthy:

- to provide conditions for the absolute majority of the members of national minorities to learn the state language;
- to support the education of national minorities;
- to reduce the exclusion and marginalisation of Roma persons, which is identified as a separate goal.

Integration of Roma into society still remains a topical problem. There are about 3000 Roma persons in Lithuania and most of them do not possess a personal identity card, have no fixed abode or a permanent job.

The *Programme for Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2000-2004*, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2008, states the following: the non-traditional Roma way of life affects the education of their children and youth; many of them start school late or do not participate in education at all; often their learning is non-systematic and, as a result, they fail to complete schooling. Many Roma speak only Russian. Having no knowledge of certain concepts and not using them, they find it difficult to understand and absorb the

curriculum and therefore experience adaptation difficulties. Low and uncertain income not only precludes Romani parents from providing for the necessary school books and other learning materials but it frequently makes their children drop out of education and find ways to earn their own bread . Quite a few Romani parents are also illiterate, therefore provision of adult education is equally important.

In 2001, a Roma Community Centre was established, whose activities are targeted at integrating Roma community into societal life. It pursues the following aims:

- to help Romani community to see and evaluate their problematic situation, to address their social and economic problems;
- to change the attitude of Roma community towards the process of integration;
- to organize permanent education and leisure activities for the Roma community children and youth;
- to promote the motivation of children, youth and families within Roma community for self-education.

Due to the contribution of the Centre, Roma children started attending general education schools together with their peers, which speeds up the process of integration. The Centre activities embrace all pupils; it provides them with the necessary school materials and teaching aids and facilitates networking between parents, school-based social workers and class teachers. As all the children come from multiple, poor and marginalised families, the education process is fully provided with methodological materials, handouts, textbooks, pens, pencils and other writing tools, teaching aids for art, music and rhythmic training classes.

An important part of the activities conducted by the Roma Community Centre is the projects launched:

- *Development of Support Mechanism of Roma Preparation for Labour Market* funded by ESF Measure 2.3;
- *Development and Testing of Supporta Mechanism of Roma Integration into Labour Market* , supported by the EU EQUAL initiative;
- *Extended Social and Psychological Support and Social Services in the work with Roma Children and their Families in the Kirtimai compound;*
- *Improving Roma children's Physical Education.*

The *2008-2010 Programme for Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society* states that according to the data of the population census, 2.3 percent of Roma are illiterate, and 38

percent do not speak the state language. More than one third of them are persons aged 20-39, and the failure to speak the state language poses for them an additional obstacle, disabling their participation in training, professional qualification acquisition or integration into the labour market. During the recent years Roma have been increasingly participating in the process of education: in 2004-2005, 597 Roma children attended school, whereas in 1996-1997 their number was only 276. Regardless of positive trends, about 75 percent of Roma children attending schools attain only primary education, and every eighth Roma pupil is enrolled in a special education school.

The key priority of this programme is to develop education provision for Roma children, youth and adults. The identified measures include the following activities:

- organizing additional pre-school, pre-primary and other non-formal education for Roma children;
- preparing teaching materials and methodological recommendations for delivery of education to pre-school, pre-primary and school- age Roma children;
- organizing events which could motivate Roma children and youth to integrate into non-formal education activities;
- organizing in-service training seminars for teachers working with Roma children;
- encouraging socially marginalised Roma with a need for social support to continue education in vocational and higher educational establishments, as well as providing them basic support (e.g., acquisition of learning aids, covering travelling costs, awarding one-time-only benefits);
- arranging courses in the state language for Roma persons; establishing job positions for teachers' assistants in schools which have Roma pupils who don't speak the state language or have moderate, severe or exceptionally severe special learning needs;
- tailoring vocational training programmes to the needs of unemployed Roma.

In 2006, the *Law on Social Assistance for Pupils* was passed by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania with a view to improving accessibility of education for the children from disadvantaged and at-risk families. The Law legalizes provision of social assistance for school-age children from low-income families. Pursuant to the Law, such children are entitled to free school meals and free learning materials.

To ensure assistance to foreigners of Lithuanian origin coming to study in Lithuania, the *Procedure on Paying Benefits and Accounting for the Funds Allocated to Foreigners of Lithuanian Origin Studying in Lithuanian Higher Education Establishments* was put in place. The Procedure serves as the basis for payments of social benefits and study grants to foreigners

of Lithuanian origin. To facilitate assistance to Lithuanian emigrants' children, the Amendment to Article 47 of the Law on Higher Education was adopted by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in 2006. The Amendment stipulates that seeking to encourage the children of emigrants and of economic migrants to return to their homeland, the Ministry of Education and Science can lay down preferential conditions in respect of enrolment of such persons into higher education institutions.

Non-working full-time students pursuing their first Bachelor's or Master's degree or a professional qualification who, prior to coming of age or getting married, had been in state care, or whose both parents (or sole parent) are dead are entitled to a monthly social care benefit during their studies until they reach 24 years of age.

Since the autumn term of 2006, financial assistance has been provided for persons with disabilities (invalidity group I or II, severe or moderate disability, or 45 percent or lower level of incapacity for work) studying in higher education institutions, irrespective of the form of studies. This assistance is coordinated by the Department for the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

A number of legal documents have been drafted in Lithuania to ensure integration of socially vulnerable groups into society: *Programme for Social Adaptation of Convicts and Persons Released from Imprisonment Institutions 2004-2007*; *National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006*; *National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of an Ageing Society*; *National Programme for the Social Integration of Persons with Disability 2003-2012 (1002)*; *Procedure for the Social Integration of Aliens who have been Granted Asylum*; *Programme for Developing Social Services Infrastructure for 2004-2006 (2006)*.

The Republic of Lithuania Law Amending the Law on Vocational Training (2007) states that persons who are deprived of freedom or whose freedom has been restricted, are provided conditions to pursue learning in special educational and correction facilities, as prescribed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania or its authorised institutions. Vocational training of these persons is combined with social integration measures.

Starting with 2005, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange Training Service, in conjunction with the Lithuanian Society for Prisoners' Care and several corrective institutions, has been implementing the project on *Developing Convicts' Social and Vocational Skills to Facilitate their Integration into Labour Market*. The Prison Department has initiated the following projects related to convicts' education: *The Selected*; *Developing Convicts' Skills for Independent Life by Enhancing their Motivation to Integrate into Society and Labour Market*.

School non-attendees This group of children is a potential socially excluded group. In 2004, the *Programme for Socialization of Children and Youth* was approved. The deadline for its implementation is 2014. The Programme aims at ensuring welfare for children and youth below the age of 18. To pursue this goaltargeted extra-curricular activities, preventive and educational programmes (strategies) are elaborated and implemented, on the basis of social partnership, to facilitate successful socialization of children and youth and develop their cultural maturity, civil attitudes, social skills, self-expression, competencies and inclinations, as well as create more advanced conditions for social and educational development. Among the objectives of the Programme is to ensure social, pedagogical, psychological and other types of assistance to children and youth exposed to social exclusion.

During the implementation of the Programme, *Guidelines on Bringing Children Back to Schools* was approved in 2005. This document states that children fail to attend school due to various reasons, such as: psychological personality problems, failure to absorb the content of information presented and knowledge ‘gaps’, emotional and behavioural disorders, unsatisfactory socio-economic circumstances in the family, failure to provide timely pedagogical and psychological assistance, conflicts with teachers and peers, as well as teachers’ inadequate competencies to deal with truancy and school absenteeism.

In implementing the Guidelines, the following priorities should be emphasized:

- establishing a system of bringing children back to mainstream education on the school, municipal and national level, introducing such measures, as ‘finding’, motivating and re-socialising them, as well as other necessary measures.
- improving the accounting system of school non-attendees by delegating the responsibility for recording all cases of non-attendees within its territory to municipal administrations;
- updating relevant legal acts and drafting new legislation to make parents legally responsible for their children’s schooling;
- pooling human resources to work with children at-risk and special needs children as well as their families; developing specialists’ competencies needed for such work; improving accessibility of pedagogical and psychological assistance for children with special educational needs through updating methodological and economic facilities of municipal pedagogical psychological services, developing infrastructure and increasing the number of job positions for specialists.
- establishing the infrastructure of community-based social services, targeted at social risk families, and ensuring a more comprehensive coverage of such services, so that as many

risk group families as possible have access to these services and that children from disadvantaged families have an opportunity to acquire education;

- seeking to ensure that a child with learning difficulties has access to pedagogical, social, special pedagogical, psychological and other types of assistance provided in a timely manner.

The *Programme for Bringing Non-Attendees Back to School*, drafted in 2007 and currently submitted for deliberation, could be regarded as the outcome of the abovementioned Guidelines. The aim of the Programme is to reduce the number of non-attendees and irregular school attendees.

The Law Amending the Law on Vocational Training guarantees for persons with special needs the right to pursue learning according to vocational training programmes and acquire qualifications. Upon completion of special education programmes, such persons can continue their education together with other pupils, according to vocational training programmes adapted to their needs.

2. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE ROAD AHEAD

2.1. Approaches, scope and content

The current vision of inclusive education in Lithuania

In 2006-2007 the share of learners with special needs under the age of 21 receiving integrated education provision in general education schools of Lithuania was 10.2%. Since 200, the number of pupils in integrated education has been steadily growing. About 90% of pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in mainstream classes, which underscores the importance of ever increasing attention to promoting education of special needs children and youth together with their peers.

Learners with special educational needs have access to services provided by three ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the Ministry of Health). The key documents shaping the development and the practical implementation of special education policy were adopted soon after the restoration of independence of Lithuania. Among them were the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992), the Republic of Lithuania Law on Education (1991; the new wording was adopted in 1998), and the Law on Special Education (1998). Of particular importance was the Salamanca Declaration. The enactment of the Law on Special Education was followed by a number of

important secondary legislation acts which standardized the rules and procedures governing administration of examinations, home tuition, setting up and organizing the work of special education commission at educational establishments, provision of special pedagogical assistance, within home settings, to pre-school children with special educational needs, admission of special needs learners to special education establishments and other fields of education.

During its development and implementation stage, the Law on Special Education was highly progressive. However, several years later, its adequacy to meet the current-day needs was questioned. The majority of legal acts adopted during the recent decade regulated, among other spheres, the changes in special education introduced with the first wave of new ideas, the main driving force of which was integrated education of children with special needs. The second wave has brought about the conception of inclusive education, the 'one school for all' idea and the need to merge general and special education into one inclusive system. These are new challenges to the overall system of education and the intended delivery shift requires a solid legal basis.

The key documents expressing a certain attitude to the rudiments of inclusive education in the state policy are the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2003), the Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2005), and the Law on Education (2003).

The Provisions of the National Education Strategy include measures to ensure availability, continuity of education and social justice in delivering it:

- creating opportunities for efficient education of children with different abilities and needs;
- implementing targeted complementary pedagogical and social work programmes aimed at children experiencing problems;
- creating the necessary conditions for learners to maintain and improve their health, and ensuring continuous monitoring of their health;
- improving the learning and studying conditions for ethnic minority children, devoting special attention to the educational needs of small ethnic communities;
- creating opportunities to learn and acquire education for children of migrating families;
- developing and expanding a system of support for exceptionally gifted children and youth;
- developing a flexible and efficient system of financial support to students.

Among other measures devoted to creating conditions for life-long learning are:

- creation of an integral area of life-long education; creation of the learning environment to match the different needs of individuals and the development of a diversity of the forms of education by bringing together the efforts and resources of the Ministry of Education and Science and other ministries.
- Expansion of financial life-long learning capabilities; preparation and implementation of the national and regional continuing adult education development programmes;
- Provision of favourable learning and study conditions to all Lithuanian adult residents seeking basic, secondary or higher education; expanding the system of information and counselling about learning opportunities.

Key challenges in ensuring educational and social inclusion

The *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012* does not restrict itself to problems of the past. The document seeks to highlight changes Lithuania and the whole world are undergoing today, to project the response of education to new challenges, each of which can open up certain opportunities, yet, at the same time, can pose threats. Under conditions of globalization, Lithuanian education has to meet the duty of ensuring provision of education to the children of migrating families. It should contribute to teaching solidarity, learning to live together with our socially more vulnerable fellows. Education should be based on the principles of equal opportunities and social justice so that each and everybody in Lithuania feel the state's effort to help them straighten out and join the society of people contributing to its welfare and responsible for their own life.

The *Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2010 (2005)* groups the implementation measures according to five priority areas, the third of which is devoted to **improvement of support** to education. In implementing the measures planned, major attention will be given to ensuring equal and socially just opportunities for those seeking education: to reinforcing provision of multiform assistance to learners, universal and criteria-based individual, and to organizing material, psychological and other kinds of assistance to the school. The dominant values to be held are social justice, accessibility of education and its quality.

The action plan of the *Programme* sets out the following goals and objectives:

- To improve psychological, social, scientific, cultural and medical provision to schools;
- To expand preschool education services (marginalized and at-risk families including);

- To provide assistance to children not participating in compulsory education programmes, to children with learning difficulties and to drop-outs;
- To provide teacher aide, reader, escort, notetaker, tactile, sign language interpreter services to special needs persons;
- To develop and expand a system of support to extremely gifted children;
- To create opportunities to learn and attain education for migrating children;
- To improve learning and study conditions for national/ethnic minority children, devoting special attention to the needs of less numerous ethnic communities;
- To create an environment adjusted to the persons of diverse needs and increase the diversity of education forms;
- To establish day centres in schools delivering primary and basic education programmes.

The Republic of Lithuania Law on Education (the new version of 2003) is based on the principles of equal opportunities, contextuality, effectiveness and continuity. The first principle means that the educational system is fair, it ensures equality for individuals irrespective of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social position, religion, beliefs or convictions; it assures each individual access to education, opportunity for attainment of a general education level and a primary qualification, and creates conditions for in-service education or gaining a new qualification; The law conveys the state policy attitude toward inclusive education:

- Special education is provided according to all compulsory and universally available programs of education. If necessary, such programs are amended and adjusted, special education curricula are developed and additional assistance is provided. Special education is implemented by all schools that provide compulsory and universally available education, other education providers and (in certain cases) special education schools;
- Individuals with special needs who study according to programs that meet national standards for attainment of an education level may attain such a level and/or a qualification;
- Accessibility of education to persons with special needs is ensured by adapting the school's environment, by providing psychological, special-pedagogical and special assistance, by supplying such persons with assistive education technology and special teaching aids, also in other ways prescribed in law.

2.2. Public Policy

Current dimensions of exclusion from/in education. Indicators and data used in providing information for the inclusive education policy

The *Provisions of the National Education Strategy* sets out to develop an accessible system of continuing education that guarantees life-long learning and social justice in education; For the objective to be met, special attention is devoted to effective education of children with diverse competencies and needs, to the development of pedagogical and social work programmes designed for problem children, to the education of children from national minority families (giving special attention to less numerous minorities) and migrating families and to provision of support to extremely gifted children and youth .

To increase the levels of accessibility and participation in higher education, due attention is paid to the provision of assistive means to persons with disabilities and to organization of the necessary assistance to Lithuanian emigrants arriving in Lithuania to study. To increase opportunities for young people from families receiving social support, the *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2003)* envisage a flexible and efficient system for supporting students that would cover study credits, differentiated social scholarships, and differentiated dormitory charges.

In distributing assistance from the EU structural funds, special attention was devoted to projects aiming to increase accessibility of education by removing the existing barriers that prevent adults from attaining a profession in high demand, or upgrading their qualification and encouraging educational institutions to develop programmes for the following risk groups: convicts, minor convicts, women advanced in years, persons with physical or mental disabilities, former prisoners, drug addicts.

The data necessary for the development of inclusive education are obtained from various sources. The support improvement part of the *Implementation Programme for the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2005)* stipulates plans to develop universal and criteria based system of individual support to learners. The following indicators and benchmarks have been determined for the monitoring of implementation:

- Share of 1 to 6 - year-old children in educational institutions (44% in 2002; 60% expected by 2012);
- Share of 5 to 6 - year-old children in educational institutions (76% in 2002; 90% expected by 2012);

- Share of families raising 1 to 6 year-old children and receiving educational assistance (2% in 2003; 25% expected by 2012);
- Number of children per tender in educational institutions, in units (1720 in 2003; expected reduction to 700 by 2012)
- Share of 7 to16 year-olds not participating in compulsory education (0.7% in 2003; expected reduction to 0.2% by 2012);
- Increase of pupil basket funds designed for special needs children (10% in 2003; 40% expected rate by 2012).

Seeking to provide access for education specialists to the data necessary for their work, the *Education Management Information System* was set up, the *Description of the Procedure of National Education Monitoring* and the *National Education Monitoring Indicators* were developed and approved in 2005. Every year, studies on the state of education are commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science; national-level learner achievement surveys are conducted, which provide topical information about the achievements of learners and the factors determining them; international-level studies are carried out facilitating evaluation of achievements and the determining factors enabling comparison of the findings with those of other countries. Data relevant for education is also accumulated by the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Current trends in education reform designed for inclusive education

Current education reforms promote development of inclusive education in many various ways and forms such as: official provisions stipulated in strategic education documents, social and curriculum improvement programmes under implementation, national and international projects.

In 2007, the *Preschool and Pre-Primary Education Development Programme 2007-2012* was adopted. It will help to increase regional and financial accessibility of preschool and pre-primary education and reduce the social exclusion of children by ensuring equal start opportunities. To reduce the number of children who do not participate in compulsory education and to create a system for bringing children back to school, the *Guidelines for bringing Children Back to School* were endorsed in 2005. In addressing the problem of non-attendance and seeking to draw attention to it, the *2001-2005 Programme for the Establishment of Pedagogue Job Positions in Educational Institutions* and the *2005–2008 Programme for Provision to Special Needs Pupils of Transportation “Geltonasis Autobusas”*

(the Yellow Bus) have been implemented, the Programme for the Provision of Yellow Buses to Schools 2006-2008 has been endorsed, the provision of pedagogical and psychological assistance model is being implemented, various events are organized and studies of the state of education conducted continually.

A possibility for basic and secondary school drop-outs lacking learning motivation to return to consecutive mainstream education is ensured on the basis of the *Concept of Youth Schools (2005)*. In implementing the education strategy, a number of documents, relevant for the education of children belonging to national minorities, have been adopted including: the *Polish National Minority Education Development Strategy (2005)* and the *Description of Recommendations on Organizing National Minority Language Learning in General Education Schools (2006)*. To facilitate access of education for foreigners, both children and adults, the *Description of the Procedures Related to Education, in Remedial Children or Adult Classes and Remedial Mobile Groups, of Foreigners and Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania Arriving in or Returning to Live and Work in the Republic of Lithuania* was prepared, according to which foreigners, children and adults, and citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who have come or returned to live or work in Lithuania and who do not know Lithuanian can take a one-year course of the Lithuanian language in a remedial class or a remedial mobile group before enrolling in a consecutive education programme in a general education school. To promote support to children and youth with exceptional abilities, the Minister of Education and Science endorsed the *Description of Criteria for the Support of Gifted Children Programmes (2005)*, the *Gifted Children and Youth Education Strategy (2005)* and the *Gifted Children and Youth Education Programme and Implementation Measures (2006)*.

Seeking to increase socialization opportunities for children and youth and to promote development of cultural and civic maturity, the *Children and Youth Socialization Programme* was approved in 2004.

The *2007-2012 Human Resources Development Programme (2006)* aims at increasing life-long learning opportunities for the citizens of Lithuania. It projects improving and consolidating the institutional system of life-long learning, upgrading life-long learning provision quality and increasing its accessibility.

The EU supported projects have also made a substantial contribution to the development of inclusive education, e.g. the “Reduction of Drop-Outs by Promoting Preventive Group Activities in Educational Institutions”, “Development and Implementation of Modules on Upgrading Professional-Pedagogical Competencies of Child Welfare Specialists Working with Children Suffering from Social Exclusion”, “ “Model for the Extension of Opportunities for

14–19 Year Old Pupils to Choose an Education Scheme”, “ Distance Education Development and its Integration into Traditional Instruction in the Labour Exchange Training System” and others.

2.3 Systems, Linkages Transfers

In 2007, as part of measures undertaken to implement the *Republic of Lithuania Government Programme for 2006–2008*, the *Law on the Amendment of the Law on Education* was drafted in line with point 88 of the implementation measures which set out the objective “to draft the law on the amendment of the *Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania* by way of integrating into it provisions regarding education of pupils with special needs“. Special needs education is an integral part of the education system and, therefore, education of this category of individuals, similarly to that of all other Lithuanian citizens, should be defined by the same law – currently, the *Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*.

A number of corresponding provisions were transferred into the draft of the new law from the *Law on Special Education*. Other provisions of the *Law on Education* – including those designed to ensure a possibility for the education system to run smoothly and be continuously improved, create effective management of educational institutions, develop specific legal framework for their activities and solidify the changes currently taking place in the education system and community – continue to be specified.

As compared with the *Law on Education* (2003) currently in force, the new *Law on Education* reveals a number of new aspects of legal regulation. The current *Law on Education* includes only the most general provisions regarding education of and assistance to individuals with special educational needs. A detailed regulation of issues of special education such as the structure of the special education system, organisation of special education, pedagogical, psychological, social and medical assistance, training of special education specialists, rights and obligations of individuals with special educational needs, their parents and teachers as well as administration and funding of special education are all specified in the *Law on Special Education*. As, in practice, the same provisions are applied both to individuals with special educational needs and all other pupils, it is only the provisions applied to pupils with special needs for the purpose of ensuring accessibility and quality of their education that are transferred to the new draft law. The new law sets out a detailed classification of special educational needs, identifies who is responsible for assessment of pupils’ special educational needs and assignment of special education to them, defines what special needs pupils and up to

what age can attend schools of general education or classes specially designed for them. Supplementary legal acts are to be adopted by the Government. They will specify a number of issues, including approval of the procedure for organisation of special education, requirements for the by-laws of pedagogical-psychological services, formation of special education commissions and organisation of their activities, procedure for rendering special assistance, adaptation of education programmes to the needs of pupils with special educational needs, etc.

Special measures are scheduled as part of integration of provisions of the *Law on Special Education* into the new version of the *Law on Education*. They include the following:

- amendment of seven legal acts regulating secondary education,
 - development of five new legal acts regulating **education of pupils with special needs**.

Major obstacles and drives in the development of inclusive education

At present, the major **obstacles** in the development of inclusive education are as follows:

1. Insufficient funding of education

Since 2000, allocations from the State budget and municipal budgets to fund education have been growing. Allocations from the State budget to education as part of GDP, however, have been continuously decreasing. In 2002–2005, as compared with the part of GDP per capita, the amount of funds allocated to one pupil/student (following all types of programmes) kept going down. The methodology of funding education should be further improved by increasing the part of the pupil's basket allocated for individuals with special educational needs and the founders' accountability for using that part of financing to render assistance to pupils should be made much clearer.

2. Lack of databases with information about all individuals with special needs (including the disabled) in municipalities and the country

The total number of disabled people up to the age of 21 is unknown in Lithuania. The Department of Statistics of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania) is the key institution administering the official statistical information of the Republic of Lithuania. The Department of Statistics obtains statistical data on education from the Ministry of Education and Science and information on the number

of disabled people is provided to it by the Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Regularly updated information on the total number of disabled people up to the age of 21 is not available at the Department of Statistics. Nobody knows how many disabled people up to the age of 21 have special needs. It is possible to identify only those people who can be found in the registers of educational and medical institutions.

3. Insufficient professional training of teachers to prepare them to work with children, youngsters and adults experiencing exclusion and lack of sufficient support to teachers, especially in regional areas of the country

According to the findings of surveys conducted, special pedagogues admit that they lack experience in applying Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in the process of education and skills related to project development and management, foreign languages, planning and analysis of professional activities. They also lack training in the development of education programmes and specific features of work in general education schools. Teachers of general education schools, subject teachers in particular, experience shortage of specific knowledge regarding ways of organising inclusive education, educational methods to be applied to pupils with special educational needs, adaptation of education content to meet the needs of pupils with different capabilities – in general, individualisation of the overall education process. Study programmes used for the initial training of primary school and subject teachers do not provide enough opportunities for future teachers to develop attitudes and obtain skills and knowledge necessary for work in the inclusive education system. A lack of motivation for teachers to work efficiently and a steady growth of their mean age are also becoming additional stumbling blocks in the development of inclusive education.

4. Lack of people's positive attitude and tolerance of their fellow citizens with special needs (disabled people, immigrants, political refugees, convicts, representatives of other nationalities, etc.).

The key **drivers enhancing** implementation of inclusive education are adequate and timely political judgements and enlightenment of our public at large. In the process of shaping the policy, the most important role goes to the Ministry of Education and Science, but the role played by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry of Health Care and other governmental structures, non-governmental and public organisations is also very important.

The concept of 'Education for All' is declared in the *Strategy for Long-term Development of the State, Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003–2012* and *Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*. Implementation of the provisions of the Strategy is aimed at creating an inclusive learning setting suitable for individuals with different needs, expanding the variety of forms of education and the system of assistance to individuals with various needs, ensuring a possibility for pupils with special needs to learn in schools of all types in a safe setting providing programmes of formal and non-formal education, gradually decreasing the number of specialised (boarding) schools and promoting the idea of turning the most advanced schools into centres of methodical assistance. The motto of the Project is: "From segregation to 'Education for All!'"

In Lithuania, implementation of provisions underlying the 'Education for All' concept is understood as:

- more effective involvement of pupils with special educational needs in the life of their class, school and community,
- positive changes in culture, politics and educational practice to satisfy a wide range of pupils' educational needs,
- acceptance of existing differences in pupils as a norm and recognition of benefits provided by inclusive education to all pupils if only because each of them is able to enrich others through being different.

The measures outlined below are aimed at promoting inclusive education and social life and supporting the process of its implementation.

Specific measures to make education more inclusive

As part of the process to create a more flexible education system and improve the quality of education for individuals with special needs, a number of measures laid out in the educational policy have already been initiated. They include specific political actions, adoption of new legal documents, implementation of international and national projects and various programmes.

Implementation of the programme for provision of special education services

Purpose of the programme: to increase accessibility of education to individuals with special needs.

Key objectives:

- To create a favourable setting for education of individuals with special needs
- To ensure the professional training of teachers enabling them to educate individuals of different age groups with special needs.

Measures for the implementation of the programme:

- To adjust the methodology for computation of the pupil's basket and the number of notional pupils: to provide funds for financing of specialists rendering special pedagogical and psychological assistance
- To create a favourable setting for education of individuals with special needs: by way of readjusting school facilities to make them more convenient for individuals with special needs (including those with disabilities); expanding a variety of schools (classes); creating more favourable learning conditions with a special focus on pupils' individual learning needs; encouraging special schools to undertake the functions of methodical centres and strengthening the material and methodical basis of special schools and schools providing the basic and secondary education programmes; expanding a complex special pedagogical, psychological sociopedagogical and specialised assistance; improving the system of supplying handicapped pupils with special teaching aids and compensatory equipment; increasing availability of assistance provided by teachers' aides and other specialists in schools
- To ensure the professional training of teachers enabling them to educate individuals with special needs: by way of improving the initial training of teachers at the country's institutions of higher education; creating conditions for teachers and school principals to improve their professional qualifications and obtain the knowledge and skills they may lack in education of individuals with special needs and in organisation of their learning process; improving the training of psychologists and both special and social pedagogues at the country's institutions of higher education; carrying out research in organisation of the learning process for individuals with special needs and the use of special teaching aids and compensatory equipment; improving the supply system of schools and institutions rendering assistance to pupils, teachers and schools with methodical resources providing a wider coverage of the current trends in the development of special education

- To create conditions for managers, researchers and specialists to participate in the activities of working groups of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education to produce recommendations and guidelines regarding education of individuals with special needs to politicians and specialists engaged in the formation of education policies of individual Member States of the European Union and get involved in the process of implementation of various measures under the Agency's action programme.

Improvement of the system for provision of special pedagogical and psychological assistance

- At present, there are 53 municipal pedagogical psychological services (PPS) in the country.
- PPS are equipped with methodologies for assessment of children's intellectual capabilities, scales for evaluation of children's development in pre-school age, methodologies for measuring children's maturity for school and other pedagogical and psychological assessment methodologies; PPS are also engaged in the process of adaptation of various methodologies for the needs of Lithuania.
- PPS are equipped with computers and other equipment.
- PPS psychologists and special pedagogues improve their professional qualifications at trainings provided by the National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology and other centres offering programmes for enhancement of professional qualifications.
- Standard regulations for municipal pedagogical psychological services and job descriptions of specialists (special pedagogues, psychologists etc.) working in those services are in place.
- In 2005–2008, two national projects supported by the EU Structural Funds were launched but are not yet completed. They are 'Return of Dropouts Back to School' and 'Development of Municipal Pedagogical Psychological Services in Lithuania'.

Implementation of the programme for socialisation of children and young people

Strategic purpose of the programme: to expand opportunities for socialisation of children and young people by promoting the development of their cultural and civic maturity.

The key objectives are as follows:

- To strengthen a positive process of education / spontaneous education of children and young people in families

- To focus on effective trends and forms of social education / spontaneous education of children and young people in educational institutions
- To muster the efforts of local communities and develop their potential for promoting socialisation of children and young people
- To create a system for dissemination of information on issues related to socialisation of children and young people
- To promote involvement of children and young people in various activities and expand the range of such activities
- To create a safe and healthy setting for spontaneous education and socialisation
- To ensure provision of social, pedagogical, psychological and other assistance to children and young people experiencing social exclusion
- To develop social, educational and legal competence of subjects involved in the process of socialisation of children and young people.

Vocational education of individuals with special needs

- A Study of Vocational Training for Individuals with Disabilities was carried out.
- *Law on the Amendment of the Law on Special Education* (2007) was adopted.
- Full-time positions of specialists providing assistance are introduced in vocational schools.
- Programme for improvement of professional qualifications of teachers working at vocational schools was drawn up (2007).
- In 2006, the Lithuanian Government approved a *Description of the Procedure for Provision of Financial Support to Individuals with Disabilities Studying at Institutions of Higher Education* (in line with which one million Litas will be allocated annually to support the studies of individuals with disabilities).
- Pupils with special needs wishing to acquire a profession are granted an opportunity to study at vocational schools. In 2005–2006, people with disabilities could choose from 28 training programmes of initial vocational education and training.

Implementation of the Programme for the Use of the Lithuanian Sign Language and Provision

Purpose of the Programme: to decrease social exclusion of the deaf

Key objectives:

- To continue research and standardisation of the Lithuanian sign language
- To improve the quality of services provided for the blind
- To develop availability of services provided by Lithuanian sign language interpreters.

Improvement of the system for provision of special teaching aids

One of the key measures to ensure compulsory education for pupils is provision of special teaching aids to pupils with special needs.

In 2003–2004, the Ministry of Education and Science – in cooperation with the Swedish Institute for Special Needs Education – initiated and carried out a project named ‘Development of the System for Provision of Special Teaching Aids’. As a result of that cooperation, *A Model for Provision of Special Teaching Aids* was developed and launched. Plans for the implementation of this Model are shortlisted in the *Programme for Provision of Special Education Services* approved by the Lithuanian Government. A Programme of Measures for the Implementation of the Model for 2005–2008 is already in place.

The Model is designed to set out the goal and objectives for the development of the system for provision of special teaching aids, define its structure, stages and institutions involved in its development and outline their responsibilities. The Ministry of Education and Science established a Department of Special Teaching Aids at the National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology and a Department of Sign Language and Methodological Aids at the Lithuanian Centre of Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Lithuania initiated publication of textbooks and exercise books that – in appearance – do not differ from usual textbooks but – in content – are adapted to meet the requirements of special needs pupils who are learning side by side with their peers in the same class. That creates conditions for pupils with special needs to feel better and forget about being ‘special’. In addition, special textbooks and exercise-books are also published for the deaf, and special teaching aids are developed for pupils who are educated with the use of the bilingual method and those who read Braille.

The *Methodology for Computation of the Pupil’s Basket and the Number of Notional Pupils* approved by the Lithuanian Government in 2001 earmarked certain amounts of money for textbooks and teaching aids in the pupil’s basket. Since 2003, the methodology for computing the pupil’s basket has been further improved and allocations for textbooks and teaching aids

have been growing. In 2006, as part of efforts to ensure the quality of education for pupils with special needs, a 20% supplement was added to the pupil's basket for individuals with special needs educated in regular classes of mainstream schools of general education; in 2007, that supplement increased to 33% and in 2008 to 35%.

In Lithuania, systemic preparations for initiating development of digital learning resources are underway. The growing equipment of schools with computers created conditions for replacement of textbooks, exercise books and other methodological aids by more advanced learning resources. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that are particularly effective in education of children with special needs is currently gaining momentum.

International cooperation

- Since 2004, Lithuania has been a member of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.
- In 2005–2006, the following publications prepared as project deliverables came out in Lithuanian: 'Inclusive Education and Classroom Practice in Secondary Education' („Inkliuzinis ugdymas ir veikla klasėje vidurinėje mokykloje“), 'Individual Transition Plans – Supporting the Move from School to Employment' („Individualus planas arba kaip pereiti iš mokyklos į darbinės veiklos sritį?“), 'Early Childhood Intervention' („Ankstyvoji intervencija vaikystėje“) and 'Assessment of Pupils' Special Needs and Progress in Inclusive School' („Mokinių specialiųjų poreikių, pasiekimų ir pažangos vertinimas inkliuzinėje mokykloje“).
- In 2005–2006, Lithuania participated in the following projects: 'Assessment of Learning Achievements and Progress of Pupils in the Process of Education', 'Immigrant Children: a Challenge to Special Education'.
- In 2007, Lithuania participated in the following projects: 'Assessment of Pupils' Special Needs, Learning Achievements and Progress', 'Immigrant Pupils with Special Needs: Cultural Differences and Education. Development of Guidelines for Politicians and Professionals', 'Inclusive Education and Classroom Practice'.

2.4 Pupils and Teachers

New approaches to teaching and learning aimed at increasing opportunities of education for all, improving achievements of learners and reducing differences

The General Education Curriculum Formation, Assessment, Updating and Implementation Strategy 2006-2012 outlines possibilities for using the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) as a reference to tailor education programmes to meet the contemporary individual competences. In line with this Strategy, changes in the general education curriculum have been introduced in the form of the preliminary draft of the *General Curriculum Framework and Education Standards: Pre-primary, Primary, Basic and Secondary Education*. The renewed curriculum is oriented at the development of key competences necessary in knowledge society. The new curriculum is better suited to meet pupils' competences, style of learning and needs. The Ministry of Education and Science is currently engaged in the implementation of nine projects related to the renewal of the curriculum. In 2006, the *Programme for Early Foreign Language Learning* and *Long-term Programme for the Development of Citizenship and National Identity* were approved and are currently under implementation. The programmes are expected to help resolve issues related to outcomes of education and acquisition of key competences.

The *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003–2012* (2003) include plans for creation of a flexible and open education structure that will be based not on closed school types but flexible programmes: schools will be able to run various programmes and modules of general and vocational education. Pupils' mobility in selecting various types of schools and programmes will be expanded. The secondary education (matura) programme will become more flexible and diverse and offer more options. The content of the matura programme of the last two years of schooling is becoming more individualised. Only subjects comprising the core of the curriculum remain compulsory for all pupils, with all other subjects elective. The key trends of both academic and technological and also general and vocational education are brought closer together and gymnasiums of not only academic but also technological and mixed profiles are established.

Development and implementation of education programmes aimed at satisfying different needs of learners

On the State level, education content is currently regulated by the General Curriculum Framework and Education Standards, General Teaching Plans and Examination Programmes (Requirements). Those documents set out the general guidelines to be followed by all schools in the country, ensure a sufficient level of coordination of the general education system and at the same time provide opportunities for schools and teachers to promote their objectives reflecting the needs of every pupil or school community and to integrate, differentiate or individualise teaching and learning.

The *General Curriculum Framework* sets out the goals and objectives of education, defines the tasks and content of subjects studied and outlines the general didactic principles. The *Education Standards* are an integral part of the general curriculum. They define the expected education outcomes, including knowledge and cognition, competences and attitudes to be acquired by pupils, describe the types of activities that pupils should engage in and also their learning outcomes, i. e. what pupils should be able to do (indicate, characterise, explain, analyse, make conclusions, provide examples, create, raise hypothesis, plan, forecast, etc.) upon completion of a discrete centre of general education. They are oriented at the level achieved by the majority of pupils and associated with the assessment grade 'good'.

The Education Standards help teachers better plan the process of teaching and provide intermediary criteria for continuous assessment of pupils by setting out the tasks of the lesson, observing the pupil's classroom practice, giving him/her feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of his/her learning and helping him/her in overcoming difficulties.

The General Curriculum Framework and Education Standards are used as points of reference when creating textbooks and developing other methodological resources. The General Curriculum Framework and Education Standards are regularly updated to reflect the changes in public life, most recent findings of surveys on the assessment of pupils' attainments, examination results, the best practice of teachers and schools, proposals of the pedagogical community, scientific achievements, etc.

The General Teaching Plans outline the general requirements for organisation of the education process, determine how much time is allowed for the teaching and learning of discrete subjects, describe possibilities for pupils to choose from elective subjects (in grades 5–10) or to choose a profile of learning, subjects studied and the standard or extended course of programme for the subject studied (in grades 11–12). Special teaching plans are developed for schools of ethnic

minorities, special schools, sanatorium schools and schools for adult learners. Teaching plans are regularly updated to reflect pupils' needs, the practical experience of teachers and schools, and proposals coming from the pedagogical community.

The Examination Programmes (Requirements) specify the scope of knowledge, cognition and competences of pupils that will be checked and assessed at the examination of each discrete subject. The Programmes are developed in compliance with the subject's general curriculum and education standards. The examination programme is designed for pupils and their teachers and people developing tasks for examination papers. Examination programmes are regularly updated with the view of examination results and changes in the General Curriculum Framework and Education Standards. Holders of certificates specifying their special educational needs issued by the Pedagogical Psychological Service take basic and secondary school leaving examinations the content and procedure of which is defined in compliance with the requirements established by the Ministry of Education and Science. Approved by the Minister of Education in 2007, the *Procedure for Adaptation of Guidelines Regarding the Examination of Basic Education Learning Outcomes and the Form, Execution and Assessment of the Language Credit and the Task of the Subject Matura Examination to Pupils with Special Needs, Former Pupils and Those who Take Equivalency Examinations* regulates adaptation of guidelines defining the form of the examination task, its execution and assessment to meet the needs of pupils with special needs participating the process of examination of their basic education learning outcomes, pupils with special needs and former pupils who have chosen to take matura examinations in languages and pupils with special needs, former pupils and those who are allowed to take equivalency examinations after taking into consideration the degree of impairment and potential of those individuals.

In 2008, a *Model for the Extension of Opportunities for 14–19 Year Old Pupils to Choose an Education Scheme* was approved. The Model which is likely to have a positive impact on satisfaction of different needs of learners provides for a possibility to offer more diverse and purposeful programmes of discrete subjects in grades 9–10 (I–II grades of gymnasiums), make organisation of the education process in those grades more flexible and create the necessary conditions for pupils following the secondary education programme to continue the chosen studies and their modules.

The school creates the contents of education on its own level: it complies with the general goals and principles of education that are declared by the State and sets its own goals with due

regard to the needs of its pupils and the local community. The school works out its own education plan that meets the requirements set out in the education plan of the State.

Teachers specify and individualise the education content adapting it to the needs of the class and its pupils: they comply with the general education goals, objectives and didactic provisions set out by the State, independently choose methods of education; harmonise their programmes with those of other subjects and also programmes of their particular subject in other centres of their school; have due regard to the needs and requests of pupils for whom the programme is designed; and choose appropriate sources helping to reveal the education content of their programmes.

As set out in the *Law on Special Education* (1998), teachers prepare special educational programmes for training and developing the impaired functions of persons with special needs and, if necessary, modify general education or special education programmes (in which case, the general education programme is adapted so as to enable individuals with special needs to be educated in accordance with the requirements of the State Education Standards). Upon the recommendation of the Pedagogical Psychological Service, teachers may adapt general education programmes (in which case, the general education programme is adapted so that without fully meeting the requirements of the State Education Standards it is tailored to the capabilities of individuals with special needs and the real level of learning). In the case of persons with profound special educational needs, pedagogues devise individual programmes (i. e. programmes designed for the development of individual capabilities/skills and satisfaction of special educational needs).

At the request of persons with special needs, vocational schools, colleges and universities, may adapt the procedure for organising entrance, intermediate, qualifying and state examinations tailoring it to meet the special education needs of those persons.

Teaching of reading in the early primary education (number of teaching hours per year)

Children between 6/7 and 10/11 years of age are educated in accordance with the primary education programme. The duration of the programme is four years. The teaching of reading is an integral part of the overall education programme of primary education. As a result, children's reading skills are developed in teaching various subjects (moral education (religion/ethics), a foreign language, mathematics, perception and understanding of the world, music, etc.) but major attention to the teaching of reading is focused during the classes of the Lithuanian language or mother tongue.

The content of language teaching in primary schools is comprised of relatively separate activities that are, however, integrated in the education process. Those activities include *speaking* and *listening, reading* (reading techniques, understanding of the text, understanding of a piece of literature and cognition of culture) and *writing* (writing techniques, creation of the text). In grades 1–2, the minimum number of hours for the teaching of Lithuanian is 15 hours per week and in grades 3–4 classes at least 14 weekly hours. The schooling of pupils following the primary education programme runs for 32 weeks, therefore, in grades 1–2, they have at least 440 classes of Lithuanian per year and in grades 3–4 at least 448 classes.

Training of teachers and provision of support to enable them to meet various needs and expectations of learners

Teachers play an essential role in education and their professional training and classroom activities are very important in determining the quality of education. Therefore, both initial and in-service training of teachers constitute a significant part of the State policy on education. Now that teachers are faced with entirely new social, pedagogical and professional requirements, they must become moderators of independent learning processes at school. Working in close cooperation with their colleagues, pupils and parents, teachers must be able to expand the social functions performed by schools. Therefore, in order to enable would-be teachers to gain the competences for performing that new role, the necessary prerequisites must be created by initial training of teachers. Both studies in institutions of higher education and inclusive school practice must be based on independent work as one of the most efficient ways of acquiring professional competence. In developing and renewing teacher training programmes, due attention must be paid to the perspectives of regular on-the-job training and further enhancement of the initial qualifications acquired.

The European Union-supported project ‘Improvement of the Coaching System for Students at School Practice and Trainee Teachers Through the Training of Trainers with Mentors’ Competences’ is intended to improve the system for coaching students at school practice and teachers who are new entrants to the profession and need on-the-job training. The project is expected to be of great help in creating a modular qualifications improvement programme for the acquisition of the mentor’s qualifications and developing all the necessary resources for high school teachers, students and educational institutions engaged in mentorship and coaching; it is also to create opportunities for experienced teachers to improve their qualifications and acquire the competences necessary to act as mentors/coaches for students at school practice and trainee teachers engaged in on-the-job training.

In order to ensure high-quality teacher training, institutions of higher education are to create conditions for the on-going professional development of their lecturers by engaging the most experienced of them in the process of constant learning and acquisition of modern methods of teaching and administration of studies. The European Union-supported project ‘Improvement of Pedagogical Competences of Higher School Academic Staff’ is intended for the improvement of the quality of studies at higher schools through the development of the lecturers’ pedagogical competences and their skills to apply technological innovations of studies.

In order to ensure the process of on-going renewal of teachers’ activities and the quality of their work, changes in the system of teachers’ in-service training and their professional development are underway. Lithuania has a wide network of institutions providing services of professional development. The network comprises regional centres for professional development, the Teacher Professional Development Centre, units for the improvement of teachers’ professional qualifications established in institutions of higher education and public institutions engaged in provision of services related to upgrading of teachers’ qualifications. That gives teachers a wider choice and the regional centres for professional development are usually within easy reach. Arrangements are made to launch the national project ‘Time for Leaders’ that is intended to create an integral system of careers and incentives for teachers and providers of support to schools, concentrate the forces and develop the spectrum of consulting services providers as well as upgrade the process of supplying education managers with information.

International projects intended for upgrading of teachers’ professional qualifications include APPLE (American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education) summer courses that have been organised every year since 1991, with attendees from every region of Lithuania. Support in the field of teachers’ qualifications has also been provided by the Nordic countries, Austria, Germany and Great Britain. Other measures to enhance teachers’ professional qualifications include international exchange programmes and other undertakings.

A number of EU-supported projects are also intended for upgrading of teachers’ professional qualifications. The purpose of the project ‘Improvement of Primary and Special Education Teachers’ Competences in Using ICT and Innovative Methods of Teaching and Learning’ is to create the preconditions for a real breakthrough in application of ICT and innovative methods of teaching and learning in primary and special education. The major outcomes of the project are as follows: creation of a model for the competences of primary and special education

teachers to apply ICT and innovative methods of teaching and learning, training of education consultants, organisation of a number of seminars for primary and special education teachers and courses on flexible distance learning facilitating acquisition of professional skills necessary for teachers to make use of localised teaching aids and also publication of numerous methodical resources on application of ICT and innovative methods of teaching and learning intended for primary and special education teachers.

The project 'New Perspectives for the Development of Vilnius Teachers' Professional Competences' is aimed at creation of conditions for provision of every teacher in Vilnius with opportunities for professional development, consulting/guidance and information services that meet his needs and are oriented at the development of competences and skills necessary in the world of today. The key outcomes of the project are as follows: creation of an attractive learning setting promoting the motivation of Vilnius pedagogues and education managers for professional improvement and programmes for continuing the upgrading of professional qualifications aimed at the development of competences and skills of primary, basic and secondary school subject teachers and school principals; development of conditions for all pedagogues in Vilnius to receive important information related to their activities; enrichment of the resource fund of teaching aids for loan from which teachers will be able to borrow attractive teaching aids for their classes; creation of facilities for Vilnius teachers, parents and pupils to receive consultations and professional guidance on various issues from specialists of different fields; creation of a wide network of partners interested in the development of competences of Vilnius pedagogues, including schools, teachers' associations, non-governmental and business organisations, universities and other institutions.

The purpose of the national project 'Improvement of Assessment of Pupils' Attainments and Progress in the Process of Moral, Artistic and Physical Education' is to develop – in partnership and collaboration with pupils and based on explicit criteria – assessment methods seeking to create an overall and consistent system for assessment of attainments in the fields of moral, artistic and physical education. During the project implementation, good practice samples of formative assessment promoting pupils' motivation to seek progress will be provided and collected, samples of tasks related to diagnostic and summative assessment created, tested and stored, seminars organised, methodical assistance rendered and methodical publications developed.

A more efficient organisation of settings for formal and non-formal learning to ensure inclusion of all learners

The legal framework for the provision of the setting and links of formal and non-formal learning is already in place: the teaching plans of schools providing formal education of children contain links to non-formal education and the *Concept of Non-Formal Education of Children* (2005), *Concept of Cultural Education of Children and Young People* (2008), *Recommendations Regarding Redistribution and Use of Amounts in the Pupil's Basket Allocated for the Payment of Non-Formal Education of Children* (2007) and *Recommendations regarding the Use of Amounts Allocated to Cognitive Activities in General Education Schools* (2007) have been developed and adopted. Programmes supported by tenders for projects on socialisation of children and young people and also on civic and national education also have a direct impact on the links between the activities of formal and non-formal education.

The effectiveness of the learning setting will be enhanced by the EU-based project 'Creation of the Attractive Setting Capable of Reducing the Number of 'Dropouts' from the Consecutive Education System in Vilnius'. The project addresses development of a more attractive learning setting through creation and introduction of innovative methods for teaching young people, providing better opportunities for them to choose various lines of studies and meet the need for provision of specific qualifications for teachers working with problem children. Teaching modules to be integrated into the content of general education programme subjects that combine academic knowledge with its practical application are going to be created in the course of the project. Programmes for improvement of teachers' professional qualifications that are also to be created in the the course of the project will help teachers working with pupils lacking motivation to study. The project activities and outcomes will be useful in developing measures for promotion of young people's motivation for learning, acquisition of practical skills and preparation for professional activities.

Various forms of studies provided by institutions of higher education and development of distance learning provide a valuable contribution to realisation of the task specified in the *Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning* (2004) to lift constraints for people seeking to acquire popular professions and enhance the level of their qualifications. As specified in the Programme for the Implementation of the *Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003–2012* (2005), the number of part-time or extra-mural students should increase and make 40% of the total student body in 2007 and 45% in 2012. Statistical data show that in 2006, the number of part-time or extra-mural students in the total student body of institutions of higher education already constituted 44.1%.

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13. On the Approval of Long-Term Civic and National Education Programme X-818 (Valstybės žinios, [Official Gazette] 2006-09-26, Nr. 102-3939)
14. Republic of Lithuania Law Amending the Law on Vocational Education and Training X-1065 (Valstybės žinios, [Official Gazette]2007-04-19, Nr. 43-1627)
15. Republic of Lithuania Law on the Minimum and Medium Supervision of Children X-1238 (Valstybės žinios [Official Gazette], 2007-07-19, Nr. 80-3214)

Republic of Lithuania Government Resolutions

1. Resolution No 1179 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of 1999-2003 Programme for the Social Adaptation of Convicts Released from Imprisonment Institutions“ (Valstybės žinios, [Official Gazette], 1999-10-27, Nr. 91-2676)

2. Resolution No 471 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the 2001-2005 Programme for the Establishment of Social Pedagogue Job Positions in Educational Institutions” (Valstybės žinios [*Official Gazette*], 2001-04-27, Nr. 36-1220)
3. Resolution No 785 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On Implementation of Measures for General Education Financing Reform” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2001-07-04, Nr. 57-2040)
4. Resolution No 785 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the National Programme for Social Integration of People with Disabilities” 2003-2012 (Valstybės žinios [*Official Gazette*], 2002, Nr. 57-2335)
5. Resolution No IX-1187 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Long-Term Strategy of the State” (Valstybės Žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2002-11-27, Nr. 113-5029)
6. Resolution No 737 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of an Ageing Society” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2004-06-17, Nr. 95-3501)
7. Resolution No 703 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania ”On the Approval of the 2005-2010 Programme on the Integration of National (Ethnic) Minorities into Lithuanian Society”(Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2004-06-12, Nr. 93-3403)
8. Resolution No 209 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Programme for Socialization of Children and Youth” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2004-02-26, Nr. 30-995)
9. Resolution No 1475 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Programme for Provision of Special Education Services” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2004, Nr. 170-6263)
10. Resolution No 625 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Strategy for the Development of Information Society in Lithuania” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2005-06-11, Nr. 73-2649)
11. Resolution No 896 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Implementation of the 2005-2008 Programme for the Use of the Lithuanian Sign Language and Provision of Interpreter Services” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2005-08-20, Nr. 101-3745)

12. Resolution No 1002 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Implementing Measures for the Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2005-09-17, Nr. 112-4091)
13. Resolution No 82 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “ On the Approval of the Programme for the Implementation of the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2005-01-27, Nr. 12-391)
14. Resolution No 1110 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “ On the Approval of Programme for the Provision of Yellow Buses to Schools 2006-2008 (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2005-10-22, Nr. 126-4497)
15. Resolution No 831 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “ On the Approval of Procedures of Providing Financial Support to Persons with Disabilities Studying in Higher Education Institutions” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2006-08-31, Nr. 93-3655).
16. Resolution No 1057 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Programme for the Development of Pre-primary and Preschool Education 2007-2012” (Valstybės žinios [*Official Gazette*] 2007-10-13, Nr. 106-4344).
17. Resolution No 1020 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania 2006-2008 Programme Implementation Measures “ (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2006, Nr. 112-4273)
18. Resolution No 1132 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “ On the Approval of the National (Ethnic) Minorities Policy Development Strategy until the year 2015” (Valstybės žinios, [*Official Gazette*] 2007-10-30, Nr.112-4574).