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Key features of the Lithuanian education system

Education governance

Lithuania's education system is more decentralized than centralized. National institutions, municipalities and educational institutions all share responsibility for the quality of the education provided. The [Seimas](#) ^[1] (Parliament) forms education policy at the national level. It adopts laws and declarations on policy changes. The [Government](#) ^[2] *in corpore* and the [Ministry of Education, Science and Sport](#) ^[3] (and other related ministries) also formulate and implement education policy and adopt and implement legal acts other than laws and declarations.

The Seimas adopts the main laws and legal acts regulating the system of education and science. These are applicable at the national level. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport or the Government adopts other legal acts applicable at the national level such as the Description of the Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Curriculum. The municipalities set and implement their own strategic education plans that are in accordance with the national documents. The municipalities are responsible for ensuring formal education up until the age of 16, organizing non-formal education, transportation to educational institutions and other aspects. The school organizes the education process – for example, teachers are able to adapt the core curriculum to children's individual needs. Formal education is typically provided by public entities. However, private sector education providers are recognised and regulated by national legal acts.

Funding principles

Education is a priority for the state and is publicly funded at all levels. Education is free at all stages, with one exception – higher education. There, around half of students have to finance their own studies according to their achievements.

On 1 September 2018, the funding model for pre-school, pre-primary and general education was changed. It shifted from a 'money follows the learner' principle (usually called the 'pupil's basket') to a basic education costs basket, which is coherent with the implementation of curricula (usually called the 'class basket'). This means that approximately 80% of funding is allocated not to each pupil ('pupil's basket') but according to the size of a class. A small percentage is allocated to textbooks and other educational supplies according to the actual number of pupils. Municipalities allocate the remaining less-than-20% of the funds to the organization and management of the education process, education aid, the assessment of learning achievements, etc.

The funding of vocational education and training and higher education is based on the 'pupil's basket' or 'student's basket'. This method was in place for pre-school, pre-primary and general education until 1 September 2018. It is a purposive state subsidy that is distributed via the municipalities to the schools, or directly to the higher education institutions according to the actual number of pupils/students.

The 'pupil's basket' and the 'class basket', which consists of funds for education, is provided to both state and private educational institutions. The 'student's basket' is provided to state higher education institutions. In state schools, the remaining funds required are provided by the founder (usually the municipality or, in case of higher education institutions, the state). Private schools can raise the money by charging tuition fees, obtaining it through private sponsorship, etc.

External educational institution inspections are organized by governmental institutions with the purpose of assuring quality.

Organisation and structures

A child must start attending pre-primary education on turning 6 years of age during the calendar year (pre-primary education is obligatory). Education is compulsory until the age of 16, meaning that primary and lower secondary education is mandatory. Students' progress and achievements are measured through standardized testing in the 2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th grades. The standardized testing is not compulsory. It can be initiated by schools or municipalities. The development of test items, assessment instructions and recommendations on how to interpret the results of the standardized tests are centralized. Schools are responsible for test administration and assessment procedures. The assessment of lower secondary education achievements in grade 10 (grade II in gymnasium schools) is mandatory. Upper secondary education is concluded by mandatory Matura examinations, which are used both to evaluate pupils' achievements and to enter higher education institutions. Learners are granted some freedom in choosing study subjects in the two final years of their lower secondary education. This is expanded on greatly in upper secondary education and tertiary education.

Key challenges

Level of achievements. PISA 2018 results revealed that the achievements of 15-year-olds in Lithuania are still below the average among OECD countries' results. Comparing them with the PISA 2015 results, it is clear that the level of achievements has increased only by a little.

Network of educational institutions. One more challenge is the large network of educational institutions – it does not reflect the demographic decline of recent years. For example, there were more than 563,000 students in the 2004-2005 academic year and approximately 322,000 students in 2018-2019. The network of general education institutions is shrinking. The network of state universities is being optimized.

A teacher – a (low) prestige profession. Another challenge is a teaching community that is aging and not easily renewed with younger teachers. Some 40% of teachers are between the ages of 50 and 59, around 30% are between 40 and 49 and only 3% to 5% of teachers are younger than 30. The main reasons why the teaching profession is not attractive are the salaries (among the lowest in the EU), a limited possibility to upgrade professional qualifications and the unattractive image of the teacher's profession in society. On 1 September 2018, a full-time payment system was introduced. After some flaws were noticed it was updated and will be updated again if there is such a need.

Leadership in educational institutions. Reform among educational institutions' heads (principals) has shown that it is difficult to attract new and motivated school heads to educational institutions. Low salaries, great responsibilities, administrative burdens, difficult competition when applying for the position and fixed-term contracts do not motivate people to apply for a managerial position. A working group set up by the Ministry on Education, Science and Sport is preparing a set of measures to encourage school heads to apply and to renew the corps of school principals.

Key features related to the teaching profession

On 14 September 2017, a new [Teacher Training Model](#) [4] (Model) ([Pedagogų rengimo modelis](#) [5]) was approved. This model seeks to modernize the initial stage of teacher training. Firstly, it is aimed at

attracting truly motivated future teachers to pedagogical studies. It has started to use a complex admission system, assessing the candidates' learning achievements, values, motivations and personal characteristics. During the studies, students' suitability for the profession must also be re-evaluated.

The initial stage of teacher training is still organised using consecutive and concurrent models. Teaching qualifications can also be obtained after completing professional studies and in alternative ways, for example through programmes such as 'I Choose to Teach!' ([Renkuosi mokyti!](#) ^[61]).

According to the legal acts, teachers are provided with conditions for continuing their professional development. Until the adoption of the new Model, it was and is indicated in the Law on Education that teachers must upgrade their professional qualifications. Teachers are entitled to at least five days a year for attending in-service training (professional development) events. The new Model is intended to encourage teachers to obtain additional qualifications in a subject or a pedagogical specialization. An employed teacher can also pursue a higher level of competence. Participation in continuing professional development leads to salary increases and career benefits. In the Model, a new pedagogical training phase – a one-year pedagogical internship – has been established for the first time. It will be compulsory for beginner teachers.

Stages of the education system

The system of education in Lithuania includes the following stages:

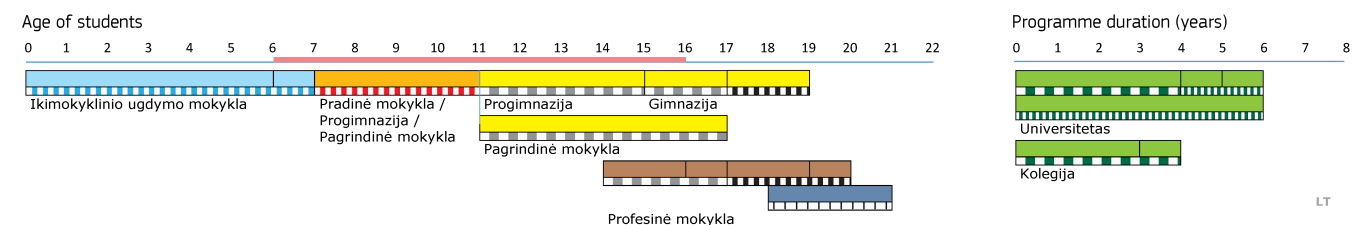
- **Pre-school and pre-primary education.** In Lithuania, early childhood education and care is composed of pre-school (ikimokyklinis ugdymas) and pre-primary (priešmokyklinis ugdymas) education and is attributed to the type of non-formal education. Pre-school education is not compulsory. At the request of the parents, the child can be educated according to the pre-school curriculum. Pre-school education is provided for children from birth to pre-primary education. In order for the child to prepare for the successful completion of the primary education curriculum, pre-primary education groups are set up. Attendance is compulsory for pre-primary education when a child turns 6 years of age in the calendar year. Pre-school and pre-primary education can be offered at pre-primary classes in ECEC settings at general education schools. It can be provided by licensed freelance teachers or other education providers in accordance with the legal acts. Pre-school and pre-primary educational institutions fall under the authority of local governments.
- **Primary and lower secondary education.** Children must start attending primary schools when they turn 7 years of age during the calendar year. Education is compulsory until the age of 16. Primary and lower secondary education is free of charge in public educational institutions. Primary education lasts for 4 years. Its purpose is to provide children with the fundamentals of learning, literature and social and cultural skills. It is delivered by primary schools (pradinė mokykla, an institution that provides education for grades 1 to 4), pre-gymnasiums (progimnazija, a general education institution that provides education for grades 1 to 8) or school-multifunctional centres (daugiafunkcis centras, an institution that provides early childhood education and care, education from grades 1 to 12, and other formal and non-formal education, cultural and social services). Lower secondary education lasts for 6 years and is also compulsory. Children usually enter lower secondary education when they are 10 to 11 years of age. It is delivered by pre-gymnasiums, lower secondary education schools (pagrindinė mokykla, a lower secondary education school and general education institution providing education for grades 5 to 10), gymnasiums (gimnazija, a general education institution that provides education for grades 9 to 12), school-multifunctional centres and vocational education and training (VET) schools. Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. By that time the learner will have usually finished the course of lower secondary education (10 grades).

- **Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level.** The two-year upper secondary curriculum is implemented by gymnasiums. VET schools along with a vocational education and training curriculum may provide the basis for the last two years of the lower secondary curriculum and/or upper secondary curriculum. Post-secondary non-tertiary curriculum is provided in VET schools and other institutions. Students typically aged from 17 to 19 learn there. A vocational education and training curriculum lasts from 1 to 2 years. Vocational education and training can be organized in school or apprenticeship formats.
- **Higher education.** Higher education comprises two types of institutions: universities (universitetas) and colleges (kolegija). Learners can begin their higher education after gaining an upper secondary education. The degree structure follows a three-cycle structure: Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral-level studies. The first cycle of studies (Bachelor's) usually lasts for four academic years, the second cycle (Master's) two years and the third cycle (Doctoral) four years. Starting in 2018, short-cycle studies were introduced into the higher education system. Short-cycle studies are intended for the acquisition of the Lithuanian qualification framework's Level V qualification (ISCED 5). VET schools together with colleges can provide joint short-cycle studies after coordination with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Legal acts implementing short-cycle studies are being prepared.

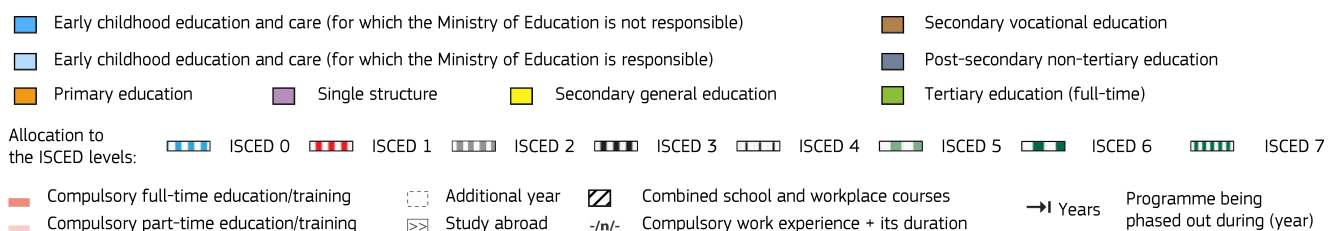
For further information, please consult the introductory articles for [Organisation and Governance](#) [7] and for each educational level: [Early Childhood Education](#) [8], [Primary Education](#) [9], [Secondary and Post-Secondary Non Tertiary Education](#) [10], [Higher Education](#) [11] and [Adult Education and Training](#) [12].

Structure of the national education system

Lithuania – 2020/21



Note: *Gimnazija* might cover primary education programme (ISCED 1) and basic educational programmes.



Source: Eurydice 2020/21

For a brief description of other main topics regarding the national education system, please read the introduction article of [Funding in education](#) [13], [Teachers and Education Staff](#) [14], [Management and other educational staff](#) [15], [Educational support and guidance](#) [16], [Quality assurance](#) [17], [Mobility and Internationalisation](#) [18].

For information on recently adopted or planned reforms and policy measures, please consult topic [Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments](#). [19]

While Eurydice provides comprehensive and comparable information, further information may also

be found on the website of [Ministry of Education, Science and Sport](#) [20].

Common European Reference Tools Provided by the Eurydice Network

- [National Student Fee and Support Systems](#) [21]
- [Organisation of the Academic Year in Higher Education](#) [22]
- [Organisation of School Time in Europe](#) [23] (primary and general secondary education)
- [Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe](#) [24] (presented by grades/stages for full time compulsory education as well as by subject and country.)
- [Teachers and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe](#) [25] (salaries and allowances of teachers and school heads at pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.)

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[3] <http://www.smm.lt/web/en/>

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[6] <http://www.renkuosimokyti.lt/>

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[20] <http://www.smm.lt/>

[21]

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[25]

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