

Modernisation of the Education and Training Systems towards the 2010 common goals of the EU

Preparation for the Joint Council/Commission Report of 2006

REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

1.1. How is the Lisbon strategy reflected in the educational policy of Lithuania as regards the priorities for the modernisation of and investment in education?

The goals of the European Union laid down in the Lisbon strategy and the education-related EU documents are directly integrated in the development of national educational policies, legislation and the development strategies for the main spheres of education and studies, as well as in planning investments in human resources.

For implementing the Lisbon strategy, the guidelines of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, the Long-Term Development Strategy of the State, the Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012, as well as for integration into the common areas for the higher education and scientific research of Europe, the strategic priorities for the education and scientific research development in the Republic of Lithuania in the short-term are: to increase employment and industrial competitiveness and to strengthen the intellectual potential of the country.

It is necessary to list the latest policy documents of the Republic of Lithuania, which are aimed at carrying into effect the provisions of the Lisbon strategy and improving investments in human resources:

*Single Programming Document for Lithuania of 2004–2006*¹ (SPD) (approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in August, 2004).

*New Edition of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*² (passed by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in June, 2003).

*Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012*³ (approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in July, 2003).

*Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012*⁴ (approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in January, 2005).

*Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning and Implementation Action Plan*⁵ (approved by the Ministers of Education and Science, and of Social Security and Labour in March, 2004).

Single Programming Document (SPD) for Lithuania of 2004-2006

In 2004, the Single Programming Document for Lithuania of 2004-2006 was adopted, its main goal being the development of a knowledge-based economy. The strategy of SPD covers the strategic objectives of education and training that were highlighted by the Stockholm European Council in 2001. These are: 1) enhancing the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems; 2) ensuring access for all residents to education and training systems; 3) opening education and training systems to the people of other world countries. In the light of the goals set by the European Council -- to work towards making the European economy the most competitive knowledge-based economy of the world by year 2010-- the SPD strategy deals largely with the improvement of the education, training and higher education.

To encourage investments in human capital, structural funds will be spent within the framework of the SPD *Priority 1* --Development of Social and Economic Infrastructure -- and *Priority 2* -- Development of Human Resources. A more successful attainment of the objectives of Measures 2.4 and 2.5 of the SPD Priority 2 financed by the European Social Fund will be ensured by harmonizing and additionally assuring synergetic links between ERDF and ESF support (to project teams). The measures supported by ESF are above all related to Measure 5 of Priority 1 – Development of Infrastructure of Labour Market, Education, Vocational Training, Research and Higher Education Institutions and Social Services. A significant role has been given to this sphere in order to ensure that labour force better meet the requirements of the labour market, and to foster a lifelong learning culture. For the implementation of the priority of the development of human resources, investment will be made into the following objectives:

- reduction and a more effective prevention of unemployment;
- development of adaptability to change;
- targeted promotion of social integration;

¹ [http://www.finmin.lt/web/stotis_inf.nsf/0/BA52679E81AFE651C2256EC10033AEA7/\\$File/BPD.doc](http://www.finmin.lt/web/stotis_inf.nsf/0/BA52679E81AFE651C2256EC10033AEA7/$File/BPD.doc)

² <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=238731&Condition2>

³ <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=215471&Condition2>

⁴ <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=249299&Condition2>

⁵ <http://www3.lrs.lt/c-bin/getgr?C1=bin&c2=230967&c3=7420>

- promotion of lifelong learning;
- ensuring of sufficiency of highly qualified specialists of scientific research and experimental development (R&D) and energetics, so as to offset the negative outcomes of ageing labour force, which is particularly outstanding in the above spheres.

New Edition of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania

In 2003, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania passed the New Edition of the Law on Education, which is tailored to the key goals of the Lisbon strategy in the sphere of education. This law makes it possible to continue the development and improvement of the national educational system. It emphasises and governs a flexible and quality educational process and does not deal so much with the institutional framework of the educational system. The law is geared to a learning individual as a direct user of the services of the educational system. This system guarantees the acquiring of general education and first qualification for every individual, and provides access to improvement of the qualification that he has or acquiring a new one. Based on the law, the educational system is a flexible, coherent, open and justified interaction of various forms and institutions; it creates conditions for lifelong learning of every individual and aims for qualitative results through a rational and cost-effective use of current resources.

Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012

On July 4, 2003, the Seimas passed the major policy document concerning the development of education and training in Lithuania -- The Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012. The strategy states the following main objectives regarding the development of education:

- 1) create an effective and coherent educational system based on responsible management, targeted financing and rational use of resources;
- 2) develop a continuous, accessible and socially just educational system that ensures lifelong learning;
- 3) ensure the quality of education geared to meet the needs of an individual who lives in an open civic society and market economy, and with the general needs and demands of the contemporary world.

This document lays down the principal guidelines and indicators of the education that are directly related to European Union educational guidelines: reduce the rate of early school leavers (drop-outs); raise the rate of mathematics, science and technology graduates, particularly females; increase the rate of secondary education graduates; improve reading skills; ensure the lifelong learning opportunities for working-age people.

The strategy enshrines the commitment to spend at the national level at least 6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) annually for educational needs.

Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012

In January of 2005, the Government approved the Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (hereinafter referred to as Programme). This Programme highlights the strategic guidelines for the Lithuanian educational reform and provides the implementation measures and resources until year 2008 in line with the Lisbon strategy.

This Programme was developed in line with the Long-Term Development Strategy of the State (approved by the Seimas in 2002), the Long-Term Economic Development Strategy of Lithuania until 2015 (approved by the Resolution of June 12, 2002 of the Government), the Single Programming Document for Lithuania of 2004-2006, (approved on August 2, 2004 by the Government), as well as the European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning European Employment Strategy, Bologna Declaration, the main objectives for the educational development of European Union Member States until 2010, raised by the European Commission, and other documents.

Two stages for implementing this Programme have been envisioned. The first stage spans the period of 2003-2007, with measures and indicators of this stage planned in more detail. The second stage in 2008-2012 outlines only the basic projected tasks. The annex to this Programme includes a scheme of specific measures for the implementation of the Programme.

The major institution in charge of the organisation and coordination of implementing this Programme is the Ministry of Education and Science. The main partners for the implementation are the Ministries of Finance, Social Security and Labour, Culture, Economy, the Interior, Health and Agriculture, the governors of counties, municipalities and other stakeholders. The implementation process will also involve the Office of Prosecutor General, the Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts, the Chamber of Agriculture, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation, the Department of Ethnic Minorities and Emigration under the Government, the Science Council of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, the Rectors' Conference, higher schools, the Teacher Professional Development Centre and teacher in-service training centres.

The Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 provides a list of the indicators and benchmarks, aligned to the educational guidelines of the European Union:

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>European Union</i>		<i>Lithuania</i> ⁶		
	Presently	2010	Presently	2007	2012
Part of age group 18-24 not in education with basic education or qualifications lower than basic education, in percent	15.9 % (2004)	10%	9.5% (2004)	12%	9%
Part of female age group 20-29, who are mathematics, science or technology graduates of higher schools, for 1,000 residents	6.8% (2001)	-	10.6% (2001)	12%	13.5 %
Part of age group 22 years with at least secondary education, in percent	78.7% (2002)	85%	79.3% (2003)	85%	90%
Part of pupils who attained maximum Level I, according to studies under the Programme for International Student Assessment of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (hereinafter referred to as PISA, OECD), in percent	17.2% (2002)	20%	-	25%	20%
Part of age group 25–64 who were trained in the past four weeks before study (lifelong learning level), in percent	9.4% (2004)	12.5%	6.5% (2004)	8.5%	15%

Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning

The Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning and the Implementation Action Plan were approved in 2004. The purpose of these documents is attracting more people to the labour market and making larger and more effective investments in human resources and lifelong learning. The documents set forth the measures that would ease providing all individuals with the skills necessary for modern labour force in a knowledge-based society, and create conditions for them in a career move and reduce the incompatibility of skills and hurdles in the labour market.

The Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning indicates these principal goals as regards lifelong learning development:

- enhance the effect of vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning on the employment strategy;
- increase access to learning, in particular for the individuals who have least benefited from of the educational system; create “second chance” opportunities for the people who failed to acquire basic education by the age of 16 years;
- develop the educational infrastructure by increasing consistently investments in the technical upgrading of the institutions that provide education, vocational information, guidance and counselling services;
- improve the coordination of lifelong learning through a better cooperation in this sphere;
- increase spending for lifelong learning by setting up special funds and involving both employers and employees;
- upgrade the qualification of vocational training and counselling personnel;
- differentiate between the regional lifelong learning frameworks, taking account of the social and economic needs of regions;
- build up a monitoring system for education quality and establish the indicators of education quality.

The implementation of this Strategy is organised and coordinated jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

Bologna and Copenhagen processes influence the priorities of the Lithuanian educational policy

On order of the Education and Science Minister, a working group for the implementation of the Bologna process in Lithuania was set up on July 12, 2004. It is in charge of monitoring the implementation of this process and ensuring the dissemination of information about the Bologna process. This working team includes the representatives of the Ministry, universities, colleges and students, as well as the coordinators of the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The representatives of other Ministries are invited to the meetings of the working group if problems under consideration, in particular as regards the mobility of students, fall within the sphere of the Ministries concerned.

⁶ Values planned in 2003

Broad representation is sought in planning and coordinating the development of human resources, which also involves inter-institutional working teams

Inter-institutional groups of experts are formed to deal with specific tasks. The group that worked out the Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning was comprised of the representatives of the Ministries of Education and Science, and Social Security and Labour; the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority, universities and non-governmental organisations. The action plan of this Strategy was adopted as a result of achieved agreement between the two aforementioned Ministries.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science, along with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, will elaborate a programme concerning the development of pre-school education services. This programme will define the financing principles and sources of pre-school education.

A few Ministries have established institutions that have a role in policy-making for education of adults in Lithuania. The Ministry of Education and Science has founded the Distance Education Council, the Council of Non-Formal Adult Education, the VET Council, the Centre for Vocational Training and Research under Vytautas Magnus University, the Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information and the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour has set up the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority, while the Ministry of Agriculture established the 'Leader' Programme and the Agriculturist Training Methodology Centre.

Data of international comparative studies on education influence the initiatives for educational reforms in pursuit of Lisbon strategy goals

Lithuania takes part in international comparative studies: IAE Progress in International Reading Literacy Skills (PIRLS), Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) etc. The findings of these studies are used to improve the content of education and approximate it to the needs of real life.

Plans have been made for joining the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of OECD in 2006.

Dissemination of information about the EU strategic guidelines for education and human resources development (Lisbon strategy, Bologna process, Copenhagen Declaration, Maastricht Communiqué, and Education and Training 2010).

On October 23-25, 2003, Vilnius hosted a sub-regional conference "Quality of education for all: major skills of lifelong learning. European dimension and vision of the Baltic countries". It was a joint event of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, the National Education Forum and the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO. The event was held in association with UNESCO, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the Open Society Fund. The conference dealt with the quality of education, a new role of teachers, and approaches of different countries to this issue; there were presentations of national practices of pursuing and implementing the objectives of the programme "Education for All", organising and implementing the programme "Lifelong Learning", also translating into action the educational reforms at all levels; the conference discussed the outlook for national education systems within the European Union and surveyed the opportunities for closer regional cooperation in the sphere of education.

In March 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania organised an international conference entitled "The challenges of the Lisbon strategy for European educational systems. Is Lithuania ready to deal with them?" The participants of the conference deliberated the development and strategy of the Lithuanian educational system and discussed the national education system in the context of the peer systems of the EU Member States.

At the close of 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science in all ten regional centres of Lithuania held the seminars "Education and Training 2010. Harmonising the Lisbon strategy and national educational policy". The regional seminars featured the presentation of the national implementation aspects of the Lisbon strategy, debates about the compatibility between the strategy and the Lithuanian VET policy, the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy in Lithuania, the EU Structural Funds as an instrument of carrying into effect the Lisbon goals, as well as about the transparency and recognition of qualifications, and regional development.

The Bologna Process Promoters disseminate within the academic communities of higher schools (students, teachers, administrators) the information about how to apply the principles of the process to specific academic or other activities. The promoters also inform the communities about the priority fields of the Bologna process, which ministers defined at a conference in Berlin. On May 5, 2005, Vilnius was the scene of the conference "Bologna Process and Institutions of Higher Education". This conference was organised by the national group of the Bologna Process Promoters, whose activities are co-ordinated by the Socrates Fund.

2. EFFECTIVE INVESTMENT IN MAJOR DEVELOPMENT FIELDS OF HUMAN RESOURCES

2.1. National priorities for the educational reform and investment in education

The labour force of Lithuania is relatively educated; however, modern economy needs the improvement of skills, qualifications and adaptability. In many cases the earlier acquired knowledge is difficult to adapt or is even worthless. Highly skilled specialists are one of the key preconditions for introducing and developing science and technologies. This priority is targeted at cutting the unemployment rate of young people. It intends preventing joblessness by combining workers' knowledge and skills with the emerging needs of the labour market, and combining the sustainable development with the objectives for economic growth. Many jobs, to appear in new rapidly developing economic sectors, will require a bigger adaptability and more initiative of labour force, higher qualification and/or technical skills acquired within the VET and higher education system.

2.1.1. Top priority areas for the modernisation of education and training and the development of human resources

The Long-Term Development Strategy of the State, which the Seimas adopted in 2002, highlights the goal of strengthening the human capital and developing human resources through investments in education and development (training). The Strategy provides for building up until 2015 an efficient, coherent, universally accessible and continuous education, providing conditions for lifelong learning, translating into action a continuous learning conception and developing a modern adult educational system.

In its activity report of 2004, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania indicates that in the short term the priority development areas for education and scientific research continue to be the efforts to increase employment and industrial competitiveness, and enhance the intellectual potential of the country. Measures will be undertaken to prevent the joblessness of young people and other age groups and reduce the emigration of youth, coupled with the improvement of teacher training and qualification upgrading system, and a wider use of new technologies. Efforts are made to guarantee equal starting positions and a better access to higher education, develop distance learning, improve the framework of study programs, scientific research and education content (to approximate them to individual competencies and needs of pupils), support services to a student, teachers, parents etc.

The Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012, which cover all levels of education, state that the following targets for developing the Lithuanian educational system should be achieved by year 2012:

- 1) All children, particularly from low-income families, have possibilities to prepare for school and begin attending it; free of charge pre-school education is ensured for the children (above 3 years) from the low-income families; preparatory pre-school education becomes universal;
- 2) Necessary social conditions for education, training and studies are provided for all socially excluded individuals;
- 3) No less than 95 per cent of schoolchildren acquire basic education;
- 4) No less than 95 per cent of schoolchildren with basic education continue studies and acquire either secondary general education or secondary vocational education and training leading to the vocational qualification on demand in the labour market;
- 5) All children and young people with special needs have access to schools of any kind, in a friendly educational environment within the framework of formal and non-formal education programs;
- 6) Each Lithuanian citizen has an opportunity to study in a higher education school in the most appropriate way (distance learning, leaning by correspondence etc.), and more than 60 per cent of Lithuanian young people acquire the university or non-university higher education;
- 7) All Lithuanian residents, first and foremost youngsters, who did not finish basic and secondary general education or did not acquire vocational qualification are encouraged to learn; the share of early school-leavers/drop-outs (i.e. young people 18-24 years of age, who have only basic or secondary education and do not continue their education and vocational training) does not exceed 9 per cent; the share of the young people with at least secondary education in the age group of 25-59 years is more than 80 per cent;
- 8) Lithuanian residents have real access to lifelong learning and continuous updating and developing of their competencies; at least 15 percent of working age adult residents are enrolled in training every year;
- 9) No less than 85 per cent of Lithuanian working age population have real access to Information and Computer Technologies (ICTs) and adequate ICT skills;
- 10) The percentage of the fifteen-year-old pupils who have not achieved the minimal literacy level in reading, writing, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences should halve;
- 11) The number of young people and adults involved in the activities of non-governmental and public organisations shall increase at least twofold;
- 12) No less than 70 percent of basic general education school graduates achieve the recommended Threshold Level for the first foreign language; at least 70 percent of general education school graduates achieve:

the recommended Excellence Level for the first foreign language and the Threshold Level for the second foreign language;

13) The ratio between the number of male and female graduates of mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology studies should at least halve.

2.1.2. The extent to which efficient investment is a key factor in confronting these reforms. Progress made and specific difficulties

Lithuania is gradually reforming the financing model of the educational system towards a more efficient *per capita* pattern. The reform first began in general education schools in 2002. Expectations are that this pattern not only will prove to be more financially efficient but will also help improve the quality of education.

From 2002, the country has had a new financing pattern for educational institutions -- *the pupil basket* (based on *per capita, formula funding* approaches). In 2005, this methodology has been applied to state, municipal and non-state general education schools, vocational secondary schools, pre-school education groups and pedagogical-psychological services. The new financing model ensures a more efficient and rational use of the funds allocated to education, and is more useful to schools. The methodology of the pupil basket encourages the heads of schools to use funds in a more rational way, adjust curricula and secure better supplies of textbooks and teaching aids. On the other hand *per capita* funding puts a lot of pressure on municipalities to close small schools, which can increase dropout rates in rural areas.

To create equal starting position in acquiring education and meet the needs of residents, *the Pre-School Education Programme* under way has been a success: 250 new groups were opened, with a total of more than 29,000 children (70 percent of all children) attending pre-school education groups. Following the Resolution of the Government, beginning January 1, 2004, the state budget allocates target funds to all the children of pre-school groups based on a *per capita* financing pattern.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour will work out together *a programme for the development of pre-school education services* and the financing principles and provision of resources for the above services.

Lithuania at this time has achieved a larger ratio of spending for education and science with respect to the gross domestic product, compared to the average of EU Member States. The funding of budgetary educational institutions has bettered since 2004. A pupil's basket in general education schools increased on average by LTL 148 during 2004 (from LTL 1,555 to LTL 1,703).

In a bid to improve the quality of education at *basic* schools, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed and is implementing in 2002-2005 *the Education Improvement Project* (EIP), financed from the World Bank loan and local authorities. The main goal of this project is raising the pupils' achievements in grades 5-10 by modernising the general education and ensuring an efficient and rational use of funds for education. The Education Improvement Project has been a success. In 2004, it included more than 300 schools, all municipalities and six regional administrations (out of ten). The key quantitative accomplishments of the Project are as follows: by the spring of 2005, 3,320 teachers of Lithuanian basic schools will have finished active teaching and learning methodology courses conducted by 119 trainers; sixty schools involved in the first stage of EIP have set up communities that begin to use modern teaching facilities and virtual media. Consultants on internal audit have organised training courses for 25,000 teachers in basic schools alone, which makes up around half of all teachers of the country. Plans have also been made for all 400 schools, which will be enrolled in the Education Improvement Project, to learn how to use new teaching facilities, intranet and virtual learning media. The experience of this project will be disseminated to all Lithuanian schools.

There were 17 basic schools renovated already, which now save up to a third of earlier heat consumption volume. A total amount of heat saved by 27 schools during the preceding year equalled 7,038.36 MWh, or around LTL 1.35 million. An average 20% of the renovation funds earmarked for schools in 2002-2003 was saved. The economised money is to be used to buy new furniture for 1,000 classrooms of schools. In 2004, 70 basic schools received new teaching aids worth almost LTL 2 million and intranet software valued at LTL 118,000. Educational institutions have installed 140 computer classrooms, purchased 4,295 computers, 49 servers, and other hardware and software. At the end of 2004, 17 pupils shared one computer in basic schools.

The experts of the World Bank released a positive evaluation of the progress made by MES to build up the education management information system (with active involvement of counties and municipalities) and to consolidate the network of schools. Six pilot municipalities (out of sixty) have prepared the general school network optimisation plans for a period until 2012; local councils approved these plans too. All municipalities of the country are expected to have the aforesaid plans in place by May of 2005.

In order to increase access to schools, the *Programme of Yellow Bus*, which ensures the transportation of pupils to the nearest school, was put to practice in 2000. Along with this programme, the network of schools is being optimised so as to enhance the effectiveness and quality of education. Schools are now using 227 buses, with another 50 buses to be delivered to schools in August of 2005.

More efficient investments in education have made it possible to save funds, of which over LTL 400,000 was spent for retraining of the teachers who lost jobs in the six first municipalities that have planned the reorganisation of the school network.

In 2004, the reform of higher education funding continued. As a result of this reform, the young people from low-income families and individuals of disability group I (an extra quota of places is fixed for these individuals every year) have a better access to higher education. With a new financing model for studies in place, an increasing number of young people have access to higher education. Figures of Statistics Lithuania show that about 70 percent of young people with secondary education in the same year continue learning at the day departments of higher schools, including 50 percent who enter universities.

An amount of LTL 18 million has been earmarked for loans to students. Loans are usually given to the most socially disadvantaged students and to students with high grades. In 2004, more than 9,300 students received credits, or nearly 20 percent more versus the year earlier. The most industrious or most socially disadvantaged students enrolled in the day departments of state higher schools received scholarships.

To improve the environment of studies and scientific research, the government allocated funds in 2004 to renovate the buildings of 14 universities and 4 research institutions.

2.1.3. Using EU funds to achieve the objectives of reform

In August of 2004, the Government endorsed the Single Programming Document for Lithuania (SPD) of 2004-2006. Within the framework of this Programme, the Ministry of Education and Science manages the assistance from EU Structural Funds for the implementation of three SPD priority measures:

Priority 1. Development of social and economic infrastructure. Financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Measure 1.5. Development of the infrastructure of labour market, education, vocational training, research and study institutions and social services (complementary to the measures supported by the European Social Fund (ESF)) (LTL 383 million earmarked).

The *goal* of this measure is developing and upgrading the infrastructure of such sectors as education, research and development (R&D), vocational education and training, counselling and vocational training centres, as well as improving the quality of these services, reducing the gap between the quality of these services in Lithuania and the most advanced Member States of the EU. *Objectives:* improving the quality of education by modernising the learning environment and streamlining the educational infrastructure; creating conditions for a dynamic R&D base of Lithuania; using all IT potential to enhance access to education and learning for rural residents, and raise the quality of lifelong learning and labour market services.

Under this measure, investments will be made in the following activities:

- developing the infrastructure of lifelong learning, with an appropriate attention being paid to the decrease of territorial differences and the increase of service accessibility;
- renewing the infrastructure, basic equipment necessary for education, vocational training, research and higher education institutions;
- developing conditions for lifelong learning by introducing modern IT;
- creating a prevention infrastructure for drop-outs;
- renewing the vocational guidance and counselling system;
- adapting lifelong learning environment to people with special needs;
- preparing technical documentation, carrying out research or other activities related to the implementation of a project.

Priority 2. Development of human resources. Financed by ESF.

Measure 2.4. Development of conditions for lifelong learning (LTL 211 million earmarked)

The *goal* of this measure is building up the system of education, vocational education and training, science and higher education, and creating high quality conditions for lifelong learning. *Objectives:*

- create possibilities for every young person to acquire education corresponding to his/her abilities;
- ensure that the system of education, vocational education and training, science and higher education meet the changing needs of economy and business;
- develop the human capital of the system of education, vocational education and training, science and higher education.

Under this measure, investments will be made in the following activities:

- create the national system of qualifications;
- create a knowledge and competence assessment system;
- building up a quality assurance system;
- develop second chance opportunities;
- implement innovative training methods and forms;
- develop and publishing teaching materials;

- improve the teacher training system;
- develop vocational guidance and counselling system;.

Measure 2.5. Improvement of human resources quality in scientific research and innovations (LTL 121 million earmarked).

The goal of this measure is increasing the capacity of researchers to develop scientific knowledge of an international level (which is necessary for the Lithuanian business and industry) and training specialists who meet the needs of the economy (capable of applying innovations). *Objectives:*

- upgrade the qualifications of postgraduate and doctoral students and other researchers, and maintain their competence;
- implement the envisioned scientific research and experimental development in priority fields;
- set up the assessment system for scientific research and experimental development;
- expand and improve a competitive financing of scientific research and experimental development;
- promote the dialogue between science and society;

This measure will combine the following supported activities:

- research and mobility of postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies;
- enhancement of the qualifications of scientists and other researchers;
- development of scientific research and experimental development programmes and basic research;
- assessment of scientific research and experimental development;
- promotion of the dialogue between science and society.

At the outset of 2005, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science completed the first phase in distributing European Union structural funds. This resulted in signing 177 agreements for a total amount of more than LTL 259 million. A key priority in distributing the assistance of EU Structural Funds was improving access to and the quality of educational and scientific services. Within the framework of approved criteria, the projects that have been submitted and received assistance will basically deal with the important issues of the Lithuanian education and science, create a better infrastructure and upgrade facilities, as well as invest in the training of specialists for new necessary sectors. Most of the funds, or more than LTL 112 million, have been allocated for the projects to modernise the infrastructure and laboratory equipment at educational, vocational training, research and study institutions. Over LTL 105 million have been earmarked to develop lifelong learning. These funds will go to building the national qualifications system tailored to the needs of the labour market, developing vocational training standards, and encouraging young people to stay in the educational system and acquire a vocational qualification. Other funds will be spent for the activities encouraging children to return to school; plans have been made for creating a more attractive learning climate by designing and carrying into effect innovative learning and vocational training methods. This assistance will likewise be used to translate into action the Strategy for Vocational Guidance. Nearly LTL 41 million of assistance funds will be spent for the projects to either develop new postgraduate or doctoral studies' (including residency studies) programmes or upgrade current programmes, improve the qualifications of scientists and researchers, improve the quality assurance system of training and academic studies, and increase the potential of scientific community.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour has assigned almost LTL 40 million of the ESF funds for 47 projects, to be implemented by both private companies and state and municipal institutions. With this support, 23,400 people will be able to upgrade their qualifications and improve the quality of work. These projects are financed under SPD Measure 2.2 "Development of the competence and adaptability of labour force to change", Priority 2 "Development of human resources". The assistance within the framework of this measure is intended for the development of the qualification, skills and competencies, as well as general and special knowledge necessary to increase employment opportunities and the work quality of the staff of private companies and state and municipal institutions. For this measure, an amount of LTL 135.7 million (the contribution of ESF is LTL 101.9 million; the contribution of the state budget general financing is LTL 33.8 million) has been earmarked in 2004-2006. More than half of the projects, twenty-four, to receive support this year will focus on the training of the staff of industrial and business companies. The portfolio of assistance to these companies makes up nearly LTL 23 million.

2.2. Extent of correlation between the priority areas of Member States and the common European objectives

2.2.1. Structural reforms of educational/training institutions, e.g. decentralisation, public/private initiatives such as (non) academic services/research contracts, accommodation services, or organisational changes related to school reforms targeted at disabled pupils

The Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012 and the SPD lay emphasis on the partnership between different administration levels and regions (e.g. where a project involves all the municipalities of a region or where it is a joint project of university, college and school-gymnasium), promoting participation at systematic level and involving non-governmental and other organisations, e.g. five NGOs are jointly responsible for the implementation at the national level of a project concerning school drop-outs.

Pre-school education

The Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012 envision creating and expanding the universal pre-school education system. Implementing the general pre-school education (providing institutional pre-school education services to children 5-6 years of age) is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, the governors of counties and local authorities). Pursuant to the Resolution of the Government, target funds have been allocated since January 1, 2004 to all the children of pre-school institutions based on a *per capita* pattern of financing. The Law on Education prescribes that beginning the academic year of 2005-2006 the country shifts to the universal pre-school education.

General education

The Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 identifies the improvement of education management as a priority guideline for the reform (approved by Resolution No. 82 of the Government of January 24, 2005). The Programme includes the implementation of the quality management principles of transition to a consistently shared responsibility and accountability, based on rationally and transparently planned and distributed financial resources. The Ministry of Education and Science is committed to gradually give up its function as founder of schools and transfer this function to regional administrations or municipal services. The aforesaid document also covers the following structural indicator:

<i>Basic indicator</i>	<i>Presently</i>		<i>Likely</i>		
	2004	2005	2006	2007	By 2012
R1.1. Number of schools in which the Ministry of Education and Science is founder, units	123	67	40	15	5

Also, plans have been made for drafting necessary legal acts, and streamlining and decentralising the financing system. The deadline of May 1, 2005 was set for all municipalities, regional administrations and the Ministry of Education and Science to work out reorganisation plans for the network of schools until 2012. The reorganisation will take two stages: the first stage will span the period of 2005-2007, with the second stage to go on in 2008-2012. Reorganising the network of schools must include the accreditation of secondary schools and transformation of these schools into four-year gymnasia in cities, as well as the creation of an optimised network of primary and basic schools. The authorities of counties must guarantee for pupils with special needs an accessible network of schools.

Besides, organisational reforms have been envisioned to reduce the rate of drop-outs in the educational system and ease the adaptation of socially and economically disadvantaged pupils. In 2005-2008, the following projects financed by European Union Structural Funds will be undertaken: Development of pedagogical-psychological services and Return of early school leavers. The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science spearheaded these projects.

The social climate for pupils is further improved. For more, see point 3.1.3. *Focus on disadvantaged groups.*

The Socialisation Programme for Children and Youth has been approved and commenced. A variety of socialisation programmes in 2004 included 348,000 children, of them more than 86,000 children joined the children's recreational summer programme, over 112,000 children were covered in the programme for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and 150,000 children in the programme for targeted employment and prevention of drugs (in total 214 projects for targeted employment and drug prevention implemented; 282 children's non-formal education institutions supported).

Vocational education and training (VET)

Resolution No. 670 of May 31, 2004 approved by the Government endorsed the Conception of the New Edition of the Law on Vocational Education and Training. In the sphere of vocational education and training (VET), the decentralisation of management started with an experiment, in what VET institutions were converted from budgetary into public self-governing institutions. The number and range of the founders of a school can thus be increased. With necessary legal acts adopted, eight VET institutions have been reorganised into public self-governing institutions. Along with the Ministry of Education and Science, the founders of these schools will include on equal terms regional administrations, municipalities, employers' organisations, other social partners, research institutions and companies. To optimise the network of VET schools and professional colleges, there were three VET centres founded in 2004; these centres make it possible to flexibly react to market changes and efficiently use the current human and material resources and the allocated funds for VET. In order to align vocational education to the needs of the labour market, 55 VET new structure standards were worked out and approved during 2003-2004.

To make VET more attractive and increase access to higher education for the residents of Lithuania, the network of state colleges (providers of higher non-university studies) has been set up following the principle of regionality. Regional training centres have been created to optimise the network of VET institutions.

Education of adults

A project for upgrading the qualification of the staff of formal adult education institutions has been completed; the Lithuanian Centre for Learning by Correspondence was reorganised into the Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information. These structural reforms pave the way to implementing the measures laid down in the Strategy for Ensuring of Life-Long Learning; it is necessary to streamline the use of European Union structural assistance, increase the public awareness of life-long learning opportunities, and ensure a better functioning of the examination system for the official language and the basics of the Constitution, which was reformed in 2004 and now offers more opportunities for adults to successfully integrate into the social and economic life of society.

As regards public-private partnerships in research and development (R&D), see point 4.1.7.

2.2.2. The development of incentives to invest more in education and training, such as using tax or benefit systems as the Lisbon conclusions suggest; and incentives to enhance the efficiency and attractiveness of the education and training systems (concerning public and private institutions, learners and their families, teachers etc.): either financial (e.g. various wage and reward systems for teachers) or non-financial (e.g. guidance and quality frameworks to guarantee and assess performance).

The learning incentive system is undergoing reforms. The Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 identifies this priority area – streamlining assistance to learning. The programme will centre on fostering socially just and equal education opportunities: developing individual assistance to pupils and organising material, psychological and other support to schools.

General education

To improve the quality of education, the implementation programme for a new remuneration system of teachers, which the Government approved in 2004, has been developed. The programme is to be launched in 2005 to be completed in 2009. The new system applies to the headmasters of schools and deputy headmasters for education, heads of education organisation divisions, teachers, vocational educators and specialists for assistance to pupils and schools, who work at state-run (excluding higher schools) and municipal schools. Expectations are that, once the new remuneration system is in place, both the quality of education and wages of teachers will increase.

For the families from a socially and economically disadvantaged background, extra means are offered to make education more attractive -- free food for pupils, transportation of pupils by Yellow Buses to the nearest school and special summer socialisation and recreational programmes.

Vocational education and training

The upgrading of the technological competence of vocational teachers has been commenced. This process is chiefly aimed at encouraging an innovative VET, providing vocational teachers with the competencies matched to the latest achievements of science, technologies and advanced practice. The methodology for the upgrading of the technological competence of vocational teachers has been designed and tested in the sphere of construction in 2004. If successful, the measures envisioned in the Strategy for Ensuring of Life-Long Learning and the Implementation Programme, thereof combined with the measures of the SPD, will lead to improvement the present competencies and better ratio between labour supply and demand in terms of both quantity and quality, in the light of the needs of the economy and individuals.

Higher education

Beginning the second half of 2003, the average wage of the teachers and researchers of all categories at universities increased. These institutions have been allowed to raise salaries for the most productive teachers and researchers -- to raise the monthly salaries of the best-performing professors.

Incentives for private investments

The laws of the Republic of Lithuania provide for incentives for learners of some categories, for instance, the reduction of the taxable income of Lithuanian residents. Based on the amendments to the Law on Income Tax of Individuals, since 2003, the expenses of a resident of Lithuania for studies (when higher education and/or qualification is obtained upon graduation, as well as doctoral studies and art post-graduate studies), which was incurred during the tax period, may be deducted from his/her taxable income. If payments for studies are made with borrowed funds (a loan is taken out from a credit institution for that purpose), the repaid amount of the loan during the tax period may be deducted from taxable income. Where a studying student of Lithuania under 26 years is not a payer of income tax or has no possibility to exercise his/her right to deduct payments for studies from income, those expenses may be deducted by one of his/her parents (stepparents), guardians, brothers, sisters and (or) a spouse (partner).

In accordance with the amendment to the *Law on Income Tax of Individuals*, passed in June of 2004, the residents who have bought computer hardware or internet access in 2004-2006 may get a refund equivalent to a third of computer price. This tax refund indirectly encourages and creates preconditions for developing the computer literacy and distance education of the individuals of different age groups.

The incentives for education in some economic sectors (public officials, teachers) are legally governed. The access of teachers to qualification upgrading services is ensured by the Law on Education (Article 49). Since

2003, teachers have the right to take part in qualification upgrading courses at least five days a year. The qualification enhancement of teachers is financed by the state budget (funds of the pupil basket). For this purpose an overall LTL 16.6 million was allocated in 2005, compared to the LTL 8.14 million spent in 2004.

The Government approved in 2004 the Public Administration Development Strategy until 2010. One of the targets listed in this strategy is organising a systematic training of civil servants. It will deal with building a coordination framework for the institutions providing training to public officials; introducing the annual plans for the training of public officials, linked with drafting the state and municipal budgets of the Republic of Lithuania by state and municipal authorities and institutions; strengthening the monitoring of the training quality of public officials and standardising the special qualification requirements for public officials at various levels. A particular focus will be made on developing the competencies of public officials in the areas of EU law, strategic planning, management, teamwork and negotiations, and on increasing the command of foreign languages. Pursuant to changes in the Law on Public Administration, the state and local budgets started allocating funds in 2003 for the training of the public officials of state and municipal authorities and institutions. This spending must account for at least 1 percent and maximum 5 percent of the payroll of public officials.

2.2.3. Funding mechanisms to increase/attract private investment from enterprises, households and individuals, particularly in the sectors of higher education, vocational training and adult education

General education

Since year 2002, Lithuania has financed general education and VET schools according to a *per capita* pattern, or the pattern of the pupil basket (the principle 'money follows a pupil'). The pupil basket is applied to all schools whoever its founder is, be it a state, municipal or private school. Each school receives from the state budget about two-thirds of all funds (educational funds), and the other third (household funds) comes from the founder. It is expected that this pattern of financing will encourage founding non-state schools and investment from households in education.

Vocational education and training

An experiment was launched to reorganise selected vocational schools from budgetary into public self-governing schools, in accordance with the Decree of 2003 signed by the Minister of Education and Science. The changed status led to the legal preconditions to increase the number and range of the founders of VET institutions; furthermore, this reform enables the diversification of VET funding sources to enterprises and individuals. If the pilot project is justified, all VET institutions of the country would be transformed into public institutions. *The Concept of the New Edition of the Law on Vocational Education and Training*, approved by the Government in May of 2004, lists measures encouraging the interest of employers in investing in vocational training of employees and creating conditions for better opportunities of social partners to have a role in training of specialists. The New Edition of the Law on Vocational Education and Training will create the legal incentive mechanism for the employers who undertake the qualification improvement of employees and take part in VET.

Higher education

The students of initial, integrated and postgraduate studies at state higher schools pay for studies to their higher school every term. This payment is equivalent to the four minimum subsistence levels fixed by the Government. The payments not directly related to the implementation of study programmes are fixed by a higher school, which first adjusts this amount with the Ministry and the Union of Lithuanian Student Representations (Unions). Some students are exempted from the payment for studies, following the procedure prescribed by *the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania*⁷. (See also 4.1.4).

Adult education

The non-formal education of adults is usually paid by the individuals enrolled in programmes or by interested natural or legal persons. The aforementioned (in 2.1.2) legally governed means of reducing the taxable income encourage individuals to learn, and households -- to invest additionally in education.

Where the upgrading of qualification is concerned, the sums paid by a company are not the income of employees and therefore are not included in the income tax of individuals. It is worth noting that payments of companies for the training, qualification upgrading and retraining of employees at seminars, courses or at educational institutions are social insurance tax-deductible contributions. Lithuania also applies subsidies for vocational training and retraining of employees in the regions with a rate of unemployment above the national average.

On July 16, 2004, the Minister of Education and Science approved the description of the procedure for state assistance to training (in line with Measure 2.2 of the SPD – Development of the competence and adaptability of labour force to change'). The purpose of this procedure is, through support to certain training-related activities,

⁷ <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=211739&Condition2>

to encourage economic entities to invest in the training of their employees geared to qualification upgrading and better opportunities for adaptation to technical progress.

Support to individuals

Since 2003, Lithuanian residents have been entitled to submit at the end of the tax period a request to the tax administrator to remit part of paid income tax (up to 2 percent) to the recipients of assistance indicated in laws. It was thus made possible to give part of the income tax to educational institutions -- kindergartens, and general education and higher schools -- which are eligible for assistance.

2.3. Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies (e.g. determining the effectiveness of the policies implemented, peer learning; measures taken to implement such evaluations (ex-ante, ongoing or ex-post) and monitoring (through public policy analysis, independent studies).

The Ministry of Education and Science embarked on building up the monitoring system for education. The Law on Education provides that:

1. The aim of education monitoring shall be to create conditions for all the entities of education management to take reasonable decisions, and provide management that guarantees the quality of education.
2. National monitoring of education shall be conducted by the Ministry of Education and Science and other institutions authorised by the Minister, county governors and municipal councils, schools, taking into account the indicators of education monitoring approved by the Minister of Education and Science, and the procedure for the implementation of such monitoring.
3. Every year the Ministry of Education and Science shall submit a report on the status of the education system in the country and regions.

At present most of jobs needed to carry into effect the state education monitoring are implemented within the framework of *the Education Improvement Project* of the Ministry of Education and Science. This system should include an education quality management system. Expected results:

- the Education Management Information System, to be applied by managers in decision-making at any level, will be set up;
- opportunities to analyse educational policies will increase;
- politicians will make, implement and assess educational policies based on information and policy analysis;
- the national system of assessing the achievements of pupils will function;
- tests of Lithuanian language, mathematics, natural and social sciences for the pupils of grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 will be developed;
- the internal and external audit system of schools will be created;
- the basic schools of all municipalities will be instructed how to use internal audit techniques.

The Internet site of the Education Management Information System has been in operation since March of 2005⁸; this homepage will serve for the Lithuanian specialists of education as a new instrument to ease the analysis and policy-making concerning the quality of education, and to measure the implementation results of the educational strategy. It publishes an overview of earlier fragmented data from several databases. This system will be part of the state monitoring system for the development of education. It is one of the first homepages for management information launched by the Lithuanian Ministries. Other data in this homepage include the major monitoring indicators of the national education system (general, assistance, personnel, curricula and improvement of management), the latest data and a forecast of education changes in the periods until 2007 and until 2013. The draft procedure of education monitoring and the draft list of education indicators have been prepared. The Government has approved some of the indicators as the monitoring indicators of the Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012. The national education reports of 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004 and the regional education report of 2003 have been published. The English summaries of these reports come out every two years. The first brief analyses of specific problems and alternative solutions are under way. The education management specialists of municipalities receive instructions on how to carry out similar activities.

The system of national testing of the achievements of pupils is in the process of development. Sixth-grade pupils completed the official language and mathematics tests in 2002. The pupils of grades 4 and 8, or grades 6 and 10 alternately take the achievement tests of the official language, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences every year. The results of these tests are used to monitor and analyse the quality of general education.

Apart from these activities, the Ministry of Education and Science holds tenders for conducting analytical studies on education, which include research institutes and agencies, higher schools and groups of scientists.

⁸ <http://www.svis.smm.lt>

This tool not only helps create the information basis for the analysis of educational policies but also encourages the development of applied research.

At school level, the internal and external audit methodologies are phased in for the improvement of general education schools. These methodologies allow monitoring achievements at school level, identifying best practices and envisioning improvement guidelines. The methodology of internal audit is now applied to all general education schools; the project for continued improvement of this methodology is under way. The first tests of external audit have been completed.

The functions of the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training (PMMC)⁹ cover the compiling and disseminating information about VET and its correlation with the labour market, including statistical data. PMMC likewise deals with organising the assessment of training/studies quality at VET schools, colleges and professional colleges.

The Department of Science and Higher Education under the Ministry of Education and Science orders studies about the competitiveness of higher school graduates in the labour market. The monitoring of quality in higher education is carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)¹⁰. For the assessment of study programs, experts of other countries are often invited.

In parallel, the monitoring system for the Long-Term Development Strategy of the State is being developed. This system, where appropriate, applies the structural indicators of the European Union.

3. CREATING A MODERN STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

3.1. Strategic measures

3.1.1. Initiatives for lifelong learning development

The Report of 2004, issued by the European Commission, concerning the implementation of the programme Education and Training 2010 indicates that the average of learners of 25-64 years (who were in training in the past four weeks) made up 8.5 percent in the EU15. This indicator in Lithuania was only 4.5 percent. In order to obtain more information about the education of adults, in 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science ordered a study entitled “Development of continuous education opportunities for adults in the context of implementing the lifelong learning strategy”. Asked if they were enrolled in learning in the past year, even 83.2 percent of the respondents answered negatively, and only 16.8 percent of the respondents answered affirmatively. These figures compare with the 31 percent of adults in the EU15 who were trained in the past year.

In the recent years, Lithuania has tried to re-orientate significantly not only the activities of educational institutions but also the whole system of lifelong learning towards realisation. This direction is enshrined in the main strategic documents concerning education development – *the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012* and the Implementation Programme, *and the Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning* and the Implementation Action Plan.

A variety of continuous learning initiatives are being developed: part of necessary legal acts has been drafted, adult education centres and non-formal education programmes are developed, andragogical (adult) teaching techniques are introduced, and social partners for various continuous learning programmes are mobilised.

In the past few years, efforts have been stepped up to develop the culture of continuous education, including scientific conferences, events aimed to raise the qualification of teachers, reorganisation of training programmes, with state authorities focusing on the need for training of personnel and wider learning forms etc.

To recap the legislation governing lifelong learning, it may be presumed that, in terms of articulated values and strategic goals, these documents are topical and targeted, but in some cases insufficient. The latest documents define three forms of learning – formal, non-formal and informal learning; however *the Strategic Action Plan for Lifelong Learning* highlights only two forms of education: formal and non-formal education. The most recent studies on adult education/informal education have found that the commitment to lifelong learning in people’s minds and especially activities is still underdeveloped. There have been efforts lately to step up this process through a larger state support and the assistance of EU Structural Funds. In 2005, out of LTL 259 million allocated to projects, more than LTL 105 million was spent for the development of lifelong learning. This is a sign that the state and the people perceive the need for continuous learning and a more adequate financing thereof. This is also proved by an increasing attention to target socially disadvantaged groups (disabled, low-income people etc), specifically to boosting their social integration.

3.1.2. Developing a strategy for ensuring of lifelong learning

⁹ <http://www.pmmc.lt>

¹⁰ <http://www.skvc.lt>

The first attempts to build up a coherent lifelong learning system in Lithuania date back to the time when the *Lithuanian Conception of Education* (1992) and the *Conception of Adult Education System* (1993) were developed. A response of the educational system to the challenges arising from rapid social and economic changes was also reflected in succeeding documents such as *the Law on Non-Formal Adult Education* (1998) or *the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012* (2003).

The latest document outlining the organisation of continuous learning is *the Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning* (2004). This strategy was developed in the wider context of the Lithuanian educational, economic and employment strategies. For the development of this strategy, an inter-institutional group of experts was put together. The strategy centres on the sectors of initial vocational training and continuous learning because these represent a) the priority areas of EU policy and b) the areas of lifelong learning which Lithuania needs to improve the most.

The Action Plan for the Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning has been approved. It envisions drafting new legal acts (e.g. designing the mechanisms of the assessment and recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning), as well as the development of education accessibility (for instance, ensuring the second chance education opportunity for all adults without basic or secondary education) and infrastructure (renovation and construction of buildings, upgrading of technical facilities, expansion of information system, improvement of educators' competencies and of the coordination of the lifelong learning system etc).

The Ministry of Education and Science now intensifies the process of raising public awareness, particularly in regions, with respect to continuous learning, and strengthens the coordination between educational structures. As a result of this, the Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS) on the internet, accessible to everyone, has been put into operation¹¹).

3.1.3. The priority reforms (ongoing or planned) to support lifelong learning implementation across the systems, especially as regards investment in the crucial dimensions of lifelong learning policies

The state of Lithuania, which joined the EU in 2004 and has seen dynamic economic, social and political developments, has confirmed that the encouragement of lifelong learning is a priority goal for the development of national education. The concept of lifelong learning is also a priority of the Lithuanian state, with the education of adults being the major component in the continuous learning system. The education of adults is the major precondition for transition from the centralised and authoritarian government of the state to democratic civil society.

Partnership and continuous encouragement of interest groups to participate at national, regional and local levels

One of the hurdles for a successful modern lifelong learning system is the closeness of institutions and weak coordination of actions among establishments, providers of institutional services and social partners. Active partnership with social partners has been achieved only in the area of VET. The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Information Society Development Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, county governors, municipalities, organisations of employers, regional chambers of industry, commerce and crafts, and agricultural chambers, training centres of labour exchange, adult education centre, non-formal education institutions, institutions providing assistance to schools, research institutions and other social partners should reinforce significantly the co-ordination and actions, co-operation, consultations and exchange of information.

The closed nature of education institutions, lack of flexible education service provision at the moment remains as an important problem that needs adequate solutions. In terms of social partnership, Lithuania also lacks a bigger contribution of social partners and non-governmental organisations to the strengthening of continuous learning. In addition to other factors, this results from the generally low involvement of residents in the activities of NGOs.

At the Ministry of Education and Science, the co-ordination of adults' education is supervised by the Adult Education Division, as well as the Adult Education Division set up at the Teacher Professional Development Centre.

Besides, it is worth noting rather outstanding regional disparities: the programmes of continuous learning have been implemented most actively in the major cities, with a lesser activity seen in rural areas.

In the area of adult education, the largest and most active NGO is the Lithuanian Adult Education Association (LSŠA), founded in 1992. This organisation has a big influence on the policy for adult education. Admitted to the European Association of Adult Education in 1993, the LSŠA now has ten branches in the counties of Lithuania. This non-governmental organisation is perhaps the only one that has more members in outlying

¹¹ <http://www.aikos.smm.lt/>

regions than in the major cities; therefore, this unique network has an essential role in encouraging the lifelong learning of adults in regions and across the country. The objectives of the Association are as follows:

- mobilise the teachers (educators) of Lithuanian adult residents and the institutions of adult education for common activities;
- develop the capacity of adult society members to be active in their vocational activities and public life;
- develop the need of adults for continuous learning;
- represent the interests of adult educators in Lithuania and abroad;

About partnership in implementing the strategic provisions of national education, see also paragraph 1.

About scientific-business co-operation, see point 4.1.7.

Developing the need for lifelong learning since childhood

The New Edition of the Law on Education indicates one of education goals – to identify a young person’s creative abilities and upon this basis to help him acquire a vocational qualification and competence conforming to contemporary culture and technology; to assist him to get established and successfully compete in the shifting labour market; to convey the basics of modern technological, economic and business culture necessary to ensure the progress, competitiveness and sustainable development of the country’s economy; to create conditions for continually satisfying cognitive needs as well as improving oneself through lifelong education.

Adjustment of educational goals by correlating curriculum to competencies

The Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012 provide for upgrading curricula and correlating them to individual competencies, in order to ensure the quality of educational development.

The general programme of pre-school education and self-education (from age 5 until school) (2002) established the following target -- help a child to acquire competencies needed in daily life and successful (self-) education at school. Six sets of competencies have been relatively singled out: social, health care, cognitive, communication and art competencies. The core of these competencies is a set of formed moral values, acquired competencies, skills and experience.

The general programmes and education standards (2003) for pre-school, primary, basic and secondary education pay more heed to offering better conditions for pupils to acquire and develop the individual, social, cognitive and cultural competencies comprised of a set of moral values, competencies, knowledge and awareness, which guarantees the formation of both a lifelong learning approach and skills.

The general programmes of subjects (e.g. foreign languages) lay emphasis on building up the communicative competence. Learning must develop the necessary skills of cultural and linguistic communication, which is closely correlated as regards the development of the communicative competence.

The general programme of primary education, based on the development of competencies, is currently in the making. It highlights learning to learn, social, health care, cognitive, communicative and artistic competencies.

The Guidelines for Integrated Programmes (cross-curricular programmes) have been prepared; they cover learning to learn, communication, civil-mindedness, cultural competence, healthy life-styles and secure environment.

For the next four years, plans have been made for revising and upgrading the current general programmes of the traditional primary and secondary education subjects. The objectives and assessment of acquired knowledge will be related to competencies.

A new document has been adopted to address the issue of teacher training (*Concept for Teacher Education and Training* of 2004), which defines the professional competence of a teacher based on major competencies.

Seminars and working groups for teachers have been organised, featuring discussions about transition from knowledge reproduction - based education to competencies based education. The official working groups and informal discussion groups include the representatives of all education levels (vocational schools, colleges, universities etc).

The background of the recognition of non-formal and informal education

Lithuania has a sufficient legal framework, yet the practical (*de facto*) process of building the recognition system and methods for non-formal and informal education in Lithuania has hardly begun. The system of professional standards is still incomplete. The adults without basic education but with vocational competencies, acquired at work or through individual learning, are assessed in accordance with formal rules for young people. Their experience is not formally assessed or recognised. That the country does not have the formal recognition system for non-formal and informal education decreases the learning prestige, complicates the relations of employees with employers, and weakens the competitiveness of people in the labour market.

*The Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003–2012 and the Measure Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Overcoming the Consequences of Population Ageing 2005-2013*¹² (approved by the Government in January of 2005) envisions working out of the validation procedure for both formal and non-formal educational programmes and modules. As a result of this, older residents who have practical skills and necessary knowledge acquired through self-education will be able to take qualification examinations without attending lectures in vocational schools and to get a recognised vocational qualification. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry and Social Security and Labour are in charge of implementing these measures.

Creating a lifelong learning information and counselling system

In 2003, the Minister of Education and Science and Minister of Social Security and Labour endorsed the Strategy for Vocational Guidance. In the following year, the implementation plan for this strategy in the period of 2004-2007 was approved. The aim of this strategy is creating an environment for vocational guidance system and development of services in Lithuania, in the light of the economic and social development prospects of the country and of individual needs of each society member.

In 2005, the Minister of Education and Science and Minister of Social Security and Labour approved a description of the procedure for vocational information and counselling service provision. The description of the procedure defines service provision requirements for vocational information and counselling, institutions in charge of this procedure and their functions, as well as the activity management within the institutions. The objectives of the vocational information and counselling service provision are to assist people in finding their way in the sphere of education and those of training and employability, also in actively building their professional careers. Such services are meant for those who have not yet started out on their professional careers, as well as for the employed, unemployed, and employers.

The Ministry of Education and Science has applied to European Union Structural Funds for assistance to two vocational guidance projects of national importance. These mutually complementing projects aim to create a vocational guidance system. After implementing them in 2005-2008, a computerised vocational information, counselling and guidance system, vocational information infrastructure and the administrative tools of this infrastructure, coupled with a network of vocational information sites, will be created; other outcomes feature drafting secondary legislation regarding vocational information and counselling, training programmes, methods and measures, also training of the specialists of this sphere etc.

The Centre for Adult Education and Information was set up in 2004 and will serve for better analysis and monitoring of adult education, dissemination of information about lifelong learning.

Investments in the education and training of teachers to steer them towards a new role in knowledge society

The Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012 describes the reform of personnel improvement as one of priority guidelines. In order to create an integral system for the training and qualification upgrading of teachers, the decision was made in 2005 to work out a governmental programme (a working group has been approved by the Decree of the Minister of Education and Science) for the reform of training and qualification upgrading of teachers and implement this programme in 2006-2008.

Efforts are being made to create quality education conditions for all students. The structural reorganisation of Lithuanian schools has been undertaken, since the demand for teachers has decreased against the backdrop of the worsened demographic situation. The Ministry of Education and Science is conducting studies on needs of teachers, to map out the admission of students, or would-be teachers, for higher university and non-university studies. A financial support of around LTL 0.5 million is allocated annually to in-service retraining studies of the teachers facing unemployment, so as to provide them with popular vocations (English language, informatics etc).

The Conception for Teacher Education and Training, drafted in 2004, outlines the essential reform of the teacher training system, and a new procedure of providing a teacher (pedagogical) qualification. Based on the new conception, studies in higher education institutions embrace only the first stage of teacher training. The second stage will feature teaching practice and the qualification examination. The professional qualification of teacher may be given only upon completing the practice on the job and passing the qualification examination.

In efforts to improve the training of teachers, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the teacher training system will be carried out, and teacher training standards and implementation strategies will be drafted in the period of 2004-2008. The reform of study programs is to be initiated, coupled with the creation of a permanent professional qualification improvement system and fellowship programs for the lecturers of higher education institutions.

¹² <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=248539&Condition2>

These objectives will be sought using the assistance of EU Structural Funds for the project of national importance -- Improvement of Teacher Education and Training, for which more than LTL 2 million will be allocated.

The right of a teacher to receive qualification upgrading via in-service education and training (INSET) services tailored to needs is ensured by the Law on Education (Article 49). Since 2003, teachers have been entitled to at least five days of enrolment in INSET during a year. For upgrading of qualification, they receive funding from the state budget (funds from the *pupil basket*). For this objective an overall LTL 16.6 million was earmarked in 2005, compared to the LTL 8.14 million spent in 2004.

Higher schools or regional INSET centres for teachers may offer the qualification upgrading programmes on parity basis; teachers are free to choose between these programmes. This decentralisation influenced structural reforms and gradually replaced a unified teacher qualification upgrading system.

In 2003, the Centre of Teacher Competencies was founded. It will deal with the quality monitoring of the decentralised teacher qualification upgrading and in-service training system and validate the INSET institutions and programmes that develop teacher-training programs for upgrading of the qualification of teachers.

In 2004, the documents governing a continued reform of teacher training and qualification upgrading, as well as tasks of the reform, were drafted: Teacher Qualification Standards, the INSET Validation for Education Personnel, Rules on the Assessment of teacher INSET institutions, and new certification regulations of school headmasters and teachers.

On the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the projects financed by the European Social Fund have been prepared: the Development of the Infrastructure of Teacher Education Centres and the Reform of Teacher Qualification Upgrading. Assistance to these instruments will make up LTL 17.1 million. The activities outlined in the said project will make it possible to implement the goals of the educational policy at the national level.

Teachers are enrolled in the projects of Comenius Programme. In 2004, 116 applications for Comenius 2.2. (languages, general courses, language assistants) were funded. Support was provided to three projects for the initial training of teachers (24 students took part in exchange programmes within the framework of these projects). Under Comenius 1 "European School Partnership Projects", assistance was provided to a total of 182 projects. More funds are attracted through partnership projects (in cooperation with the British Council, Goethe Institute, Centre of French Culture etc). Teachers join the qualification upgrading programmes of the Council of Europe for educational workers (twenty-five teachers were enrolled in them in 2004).

At present, more teachers have the qualification of adult teacher (andragogue). The higher schools of Lithuania (VDU, VPU, KU) started training the teachers of adults -- andragogues.

Use of information and computer technologies (ICTs) in education

The major documents presently governing the use of ICTs in education include:

The Strategy and Programme for the Introduction of ICTs into the Lithuanian Education in 2005-2007 (approved by Order No. ISAK-2015 of the Minister of December 14, 2004). *Objectives:*

- Achieve a breakthrough in teaching and learning of pupils via the use of modern ICTs.
- Create a network of educational computers -- a cyber space filled with information for teaching and learning -- while creating conditions for modern management of the educational system and for communication among school communities at the same time.
- Improve the computer competence of residents in order to reduce the social seclusion in the sphere of ICTs.

The Strategy for the Implementation of ICTs in Vocational Training, approved by Order No. ISAK-1722 of the Minister of November 4, 2004).

General Computer Literacy Programme (approved by Resolution No. 1176 of the Government of September 15, 2004).

Strategy of Schools' Provision with Computer Teaching Aids (approved by Order No. 537 of the Minister of April 8, 2002).

The effective Computer Literacy Standards:

General Computer Literacy Standard (approved by Order of the Minister of December 14, 2004).

Teachers' Computer Literacy Standard (approved by Order of the Minister of December 21, 2001).

Students' General Computer Literacy Standard (approved by Order of the Minister of January 31, 2002).

Computer Literacy Standard of School Librarians (approved by Order of the Minister of October 25, 2002)

As a result of the annual 2001-2004 Programme “Education for the Information Society”, the Strategy for the Introduction of ICTs into the Lithuanian Education has been implemented (approved by Order No. 1279 of the Minister of October 18, 2000).

The main results:

- *Students per computer ratio*: seven pupils in grades 9-12, 17 pupils in grades 1-12.
- *Internet in schools*: 50% of schools actively use internet in teaching and learning.
- *Training of teachers*: 30% of teachers trained under the Technological Part of Teachers’ Computer Literacy Standard, 12% of teachers trained under the Educational Part of Teachers’ Computer Literacy Standard, 15% of teachers trained how to use various educational software during the lessons.
- *Provision with educational software*: schools received 38 computer teaching aids provided with licenses for schools, 52 provided for testing.

As regards financial assistance to the individuals who buy computers and internet equipment, see point 2.2.2.

Focus on disadvantaged groups

- *Meeting special needs: children and youth*

In Lithuania, about 11 percent of the pupils (ratio to total number of school age children) have special educational needs. Eighty-nine percent of the pupils with special needs attend general education schools together with their peers. For the development and quality improvement of inclusive education, more funds are allocated every year (the pupil basket increased 20 percent in 2005 for children with special needs). Legal acts and documents govern the accessibility to education for the children with differing competencies, a variety of programmes, adaptation of school environment, provision with educational compensatory equipment and with special teaching aids.

Within the framework of the Activity Plan for the Implementation of the Pedagogical-Psychological Aid Model 2003-2005 and the Programme for Founding Pedagogical-Psychological Services at Municipalities in 2004, the legal acts governing the provision of this aid are under way; and efforts are made to provide the special pedagogical-psychological aid in a more effective way and closer to the place of residence of children and pupils.

The development of pedagogical-psychological services has been a success. At the beginning of 2004, these services were functioning only in 26 municipalities to develop into a network covering presently 50 municipalities. The purpose of a pedagogical-psychological service is enhancing the development effectiveness of the individuals with special needs and psychological, personal and developmental problems, as well as developing their psychological strength, by providing necessary information, experts and counselling to schools and teachers. One of the major functions of these services is the accumulation and analysis of information about the individuals with special educational needs and psychological, personal and developmental problems, and their hardships; about the organisation of education, adaptation of environment and effectiveness of special pedagogical and/or psychological aid.

In the period of 2001-2003, the Ministry of Education and Science financed the jobs of 473 social pedagogues. From 2004, these specialists are financed from the *pupil basket*. At this time, more than 900 social pedagogues work at Lithuanian schools of various types.

In 2005-2008, the projects entitled the Development of Pedagogical-Psychological Services and the Return of Early School Leavers will be implemented using the assistance of European Union Structural Funds. These projects are the initiative of the Ministry.

The Ministry and its subordinate institutions are involved in the implementation of the measures of various national preventive programmes. These aim to help specialists identify children in a risk group and ensure them a timely support, and be able to carry into effect the measures to prevent violence against children, crime, prostitution, suicide and other harmful social phenomena.

- *Support to socially disadvantaged students (see point 2.1.2.)*

Prolonging the working age and learning access for older citizens and workers

The Guidelines for the European Union Employment Policy lay a particular emphasis on prolonging professional career -- the longer an individual stays in labour market the better for him and the society.

In 2003, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange launched an employment support programme for the unemployed of 55 years and above. Its goal is increasing the employment of jobless people and opportunities to stay longer in the labour market.

Non-governmental organisations are encouraged to be involved in tackling the employment problems of older residents. Specific proposals are under way to subsidise the jobs for the unemployed of pre-pension age, depending on their age and the period of unemployment. One possible form of employment for older workers is disseminating their experience, such as training new employees, and thus extending their professional career.

For acquiring a new popular qualification, the people of pre-pension age receive support from the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, six regional training and counselling services which are subordinate to it, and fourteen labour market training centres. There are also more private companies offering VET services. Lithuania has around 500 licensed providers of educational services of different spheres. The programmes of labour market training centres each year enrol about 25,000 individuals; however there is no official statistics on how many of them belong to the pre-pension age group (e.g. above 50 years). Individual studies revealed that the continuous vocational education and training of adults is underdeveloped in the country. In the light of changed production conditions and new technologies, the earlier acquired diplomas of education are not valid; therefore, a new vocation or qualification is needed. The representation of older people in adult secondary schools and adult training centres is most abundant – these facilities have 3,299 learners. Compared to the academic year of 2001-2002, the number of such persons increased by 1,000, or compared to years 1999-2000, this number surged five times. It may be presumed that more and more older people continue to learn at training institutions for adults. As these institutions are based in the major cities or district centres, their services are less accessible to rural residents. In autumn of 2002, compared to 2000, the number of the students of 40 years and above enrolled in undergraduate studies soared 3.5 times. The same increase was recorded for the number of individuals of the said age group enrolled in master or equivalent studies; there are also more individuals who seek to acquire a second diploma of higher education.

The state has now developed the system of acquiring a qualification and retraining of unemployed persons, which receives adequate financing according to the limits of national resources; the principal objectives for the future are enhancing the motivation of unskilled workers and employers for continuous learning, and improving necessary legal instruments.

Lithuania has a functioning Third Age University, an independent, voluntary, public organisation aiming to ensure a better social integration of older residents in society, and encourage their productive and meaningful life; sustaining their work capacity and physical activity, increasing the level of knowledge and culture, exchanging life experiences and maintaining the health of people.

The learning of workers at this point is aggravated by a weak interest of employers in continuous learning (e.g. studies revealed that only less than a fifth of employers encouraged their employees to learn; the study report is available in internet¹³).

The hardships in lifelong learning of older residents stem from several objective factors: a relatively lower demand for these residents in the labour market, in many cases -- low income of these residents, and weak motivation for learning. In this context, there is a functioning Third Age University and NGOs, with the state offering free education at general secondary and VET schools, and professional colleges. But generally speaking, the meeting of the learning needs of older residents at this time is still at the stage of identifying and planning response to these needs.

Correlation problems (flexibility, progression opportunities etc.) within and between all sectors of education

The Lithuanian educational policy increasingly attends to the measures that ease the re-orientation of the educational system from a focus on the organisation of formal education for limited individual groups (mainly to initial formal education) to a lifelong learning system. Regardless of this, the insufficiently structurally flexible and harmonised system at times cannot guarantee a consistent progression from one to other sector of education; or the validation of the competencies acquired in non-formal education sub-system; or the second chance opportunities to return to the formal sub-system of formal adult education for certain age groups. Overcoming seclusion (both horizontal and vertical) between the sectors of education; strengthening the correlation between the academic and technological learning directions; recognising the correlation between formal, non-formal and informal education, as well as informally or individually acquired competencies.

The Soviet legacy of Lithuania includes the secondary schools of adults which at that time were called evening schools or schools of working youth. The country now has 22 educational institutions of this kind (compared to 71 in 1987). Most of them have been transformed into adult learning centres that provide not only formal general education but also non-formal learning services. Some general education schools have opened adult learning classes for the young people who do not have a motivation for academic learning. Most of general education institutions for adults also offer distance/correspondence studies. The secondary schools (centres) of adults are short of teaching aids and means adapted to teaching adults, with some teachers lacking training to teach adults.

The formal education programmes for adults, equivalent to consistent general education programmes, are not flexible enough. They do not heed the needs and experience of adults; non-formal education programmes do not

¹³ http://www.smm.lt/svietimo_bukle/docs/suaugusiuju_testinio_mokymo_ataskaita.doc

issue any diplomas recognised by the state, and are not equivalent to the graduation from some educational stage or regulated module or to the acquisition of a qualification. Module-based education is underdeveloped.

About the background on recognition of non-formal and informal education, see point 3.1.3.

Innovation in educational content and teaching methods

General education

Part of the *Education Improvement Project* is devoted to educational content renewal and improvement of learning conditions. The project's aims are to develop professional competencies of teachers and improve learning conditions at basic schools by enhancing active learning of students and co-operation of teachers at schools and among schools. It is expected that after the implementation of this project:

- teachers and students in schools will be using active learning methods, alternative methods of student progress and achievement assessment, new teaching aids and information technologies;
- teachers will cooperate while planning, implementing and evaluating the education process and school development;
- school communities will be sharing experience and information with regard to new methods of teaching/learning and student progress assessment, computer software and information technologies.

This project is aimed at upgrading qualifications of headmasters of basic schools (5-10 grades), teachers and representatives of local educational authorities.

Since 2004 a pilot project "Continuous Assessment" is implemented in Lithuania, in which teachers from participating schools try out different strategies of formative assessment and seek to implement the idea of assessment for learning.

After receiving support from the EU Structural Funds (SPD 2 priority "Human Resources Development", measure "Promotion of Lifelong Learning"), the implementation of the national project "Opening up Possibilities of Choosing the Learning Profile for 14-19-Year Old Pupils" started. The main purpose of the project is to increase the possibilities for 14-19-year old pupils of choosing a learning profile matching their interests and abilities and staying in the education system. The objectives are as follows:

- to create a flexible, more individualised educational model satisfying different needs and abilities of 14–19-year old pupils, including children from socially disadvantaged families and disabled children;
- to design curricula providing greater opportunities for practical work and corresponding to vocational training or competencies needed to acquire a profession which is in demand on the labour market;
- to create a modern, attractive environment of technological and art education;
- to help the designers of national content (local experts) and teachers to acquire competencies needed in designing, piloting and implementing the curricula adapted for 14-19-year old pupils with different interests, needs and abilities.

Target groups: pupils of 14-19, school teachers, headmasters, and representatives of local educational authorities.

Vocational Training

The content of vocational training was renewed on the basis of competencies and objectives. In all curricula of vocational training the entrepreneurship module was introduced. IT and foreign languages were integrated into professional subjects or offered as independent modules. In 2003, a new vocational training standard structure was adopted. The content of the standard now consists of 9 components: general occupation description, occupation purpose, areas of activity, competencies, competence boundaries, training objectives, assessment of competencies, key basic skills, and final assessment of qualification. In 2003-2004, 55 new VET standards were prepared and approved. At present, the content of the curricula for vocational training is being renewed in accordance with the standards approved.

In 2004, upgrading of technological competence of vocational teachers started, providing vocational teachers with competencies conforming to modern achievements of science and technology.

At the end of 2003, nineteen Lithuanian institutions, representing employees, employers and training providers, signed a co-operation agreement. The programme of joint activities comprises initiating and coordinating national and international research, accumulating, systemising, analysing and disseminating related information and other activities ensuring the improvement of vocational education and training and human resources development based on informed decisions and the EU common strategic goals. It is an important step in strengthening the links between the worlds of training and employment and, at the same time, in enhancing the quality and attractiveness of VET at the national level.

In 2003-2004, surveys of training needs were carried out in 3 sectors of economy. They cover both initial and continuing VET. Together with employers of a sector concerned estimations of training needs were made for 5 years. Sectoral research is one of the tools promoting partnership of training providers and employers.

Final assessment of professional qualification has been transferred to social partners: regional Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts, and Chambers of Agriculture. It creates favourable conditions for the development of regional partnerships between training providers and employers. Regional VET centres providing initial and continuing training being established through the optimisation of VET institutional network also encourage regional partnerships.

3.2. Problems and obstacles. What else should be done to implement the principle of lifelong learning?

Interaction between institutions

There is a lack of interaction between institutions and the effectiveness of the activities carried out by them is not sufficient. There is insufficient synergy between the training of the unemployed and qualification upgrading programmes carried out by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and activities carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science and municipal educational institutions. Institutional insularity is an important problem requiring adequate solutions. In terms of social partnership, Lithuania needs greater contribution from NGOs in promoting continuous learning. Apart from other circumstances, this is caused by generally low participation of the population in the activities of NGOs. Quite substantial regional differences should also be noted: programmes of continuous learning are most actively realised in major cities, and more passively in rural areas.

In comparison to continuous learning in the EU countries, greater attention should be paid to the development of the concept of informal learning. The difference between adult learning aimed at establishing oneself in the labour market and the concept of lifelong learning foreseeing the lifelong development and realisation of the learning needs seems to be perceived only at the level of educational policy.

Creation of lifelong learning indicators and evaluation of changes

The Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning has a clear action plan including various dimensions of learning, however, part of the objectives lack observable indicators. In the observation of continuous learning situation, results of international (e.g., Eurostat) and national studies are used, but to date they cannot always avoid fragmentation. Information gathering at the national level about the status of continuous learning, especially in adult education, and the support for such education is usually not co-ordinated. This information is collected by separate schools and training centres, vocational schools, courses, labour exchanges. Local educational authorities are trying to collect information about the population without basic and secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Science, aware of the importance of observation, is focusing on its improvement: the qualification of observation specialists is being improved (a special group of policy analysis has been set up), clear indicators for research are formulated, their sustainability is ensured, for example, during the last half year several detailed studies of the status of adult education were conducted, longitudinal studies are planned in order to enhance the quality of indicators, participation in international comparative studies PISA, ALL, etc. is envisaged.

According to the priorities and measures of Lithuania's Single Programming Document for 2004-2006, the following monitoring indicators applied to evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of lifelong learning are envisaged:

Indicators and targets of SPD 2 priority. Development of human resources:

Type	Indicator (measurement unit)	Quantified targets
Impact	Increase in share of those taking part in continuous education and training among population within 25 to 64 age group (change in percentage points)	6,7 % (baseline – 3,7 % in 2001)
	Reduced school drop-out rate (change in percentage points)	16,4 % (baseline – 16,9 % in 2002)
Result	Gross placement rate after activation (per cent): - Male/Female	40 %
	Share of employers providing in-house training for the first time (per cent)	5 %
Output	Number of beneficiaries trained (number at the end of activities)	20000
	Projects dealing with modernisation of training/study systems implemented (number)	10–15

Indicators and targets of 2.4 measure

Type	Indicator (measurement unit)	Quantified targets
Result	Number of accredited training/vocational training/study (first cycle) programmes	40

	Number of education, vocational education and training, research and high education institutions having received European accreditation	9
Output	Number of projects supported	250
	Number of training/study programmes provided for accreditation	100
	Number of benefit receivers trained (at the end of activity)	2000

Indicators and targets of 2.5 measure

Type	Indicator (measurement unit)	Quantified targets
Result	Number of accredited second cycle (Master) training/study programmes	5
	Level of employability among practical training programmes graduates	20 %
Output	Number of benefit receivers trained (at the end of activity)	3000
	Number of second cycle (Master) training/study programmes provided for accreditation	15

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1. Strategic measures

Though the higher education reform under preparation is provoking discussions in the academic community, there is, however, a unanimous agreement concerning its aims: higher quality of studies and better funding. To achieve these aims, the working group at the Ministry of Education and Science prepared a draft plan of long-term development of higher education until 2010. The draft plan consists of several guidelines: improvement of internal management in higher education institutions and use of resources, reform of funding, conformity of study programmes to the labour market, co-ordination of actions of relevant state institutions.

4.1.1. Concerning the structure and organisation of degrees, degree system, ECTS credits, Diploma Supplement and other measures facilitating the creation of common European area of science and qualifications and limiting fragmentation

Higher education in Lithuania can be acquired only in higher education institutions. They offer non-university and university studies. Non-university studies are basic, one cycle studies. University studies consist of three cycles: first cycle (undergraduate studies), second cycle (Master studies, special professional studies) and third cycle (doctoral studies, MDs in residency, and art licentiate). Integral studies integrate first and second cycles of university studies and lead to a Master's degree and/or professional qualifications. Special professional studies are second cycle consecutive university studies, which require prior completion of first cycle university studies and lead to professional qualification in a certain field of studies. In the third cycle scientists (doctoral studies), lecturers of arts subjects or artists (art licentiate), and practising medical doctors (residency) are trained.

Studies are organised in accordance with the study programmes registered by the Ministry of Education and Science. The quality of study programmes as well as the quality of research and pedagogical activity carried out by the higher education institutions is periodically assessed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The scope of studies is measured in credits. One credit equals 40 hours of student workload (work in classrooms, laboratories, independent work, etc.), i.e. one working week. 1 national credit corresponds to 1.5 ECTS credits.

On 24 March 2004 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved of Resolution No. 326 "On the Amendment of Resolution No.99 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 11 July 2001 "On the Approval of Regulations for Diplomas of Higher Education and Science Degrees Acquired in Lithuania", which provided that the Diploma Supplement in higher education would be issued from 1 January 2005 to the graduates of 2005 at their request, and from 1 January 2006 the Diploma Supplement would be issued to the graduates of 2006 and successive years, instead of the diploma enclosure, as an inseparable part of the Diploma. It will be issued automatically and free of charge to all graduates of higher education institutions. The Diploma Supplement will facilitate the recognition of Lithuanian diplomas in foreign countries.

4.1.2. Enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education in the rest of the world

Lithuania has signed bilateral co-operation agreements in the areas of education, science and culture with the following foreign countries and international organisations: Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, the Ukraine, the USA, Uzbekistan, and the UNESCO.

To implement the provisions of the Lisbon convention, a tripartite agreement was signed on the recognition of education in the Baltic higher education area. On 9 March 2005, a bilateral agreement was signed between the Government of the Republic of Lithuanian and the Government of the Republic of Poland concerning documents providing the right to higher education, partial studies, mutual recognition of higher education

qualifications and science and art degrees. Such agreements create favourable conditions for student and lecturer exchange, recognition of secondary and higher education and science degrees.

4.1.3. Promoting advanced technologies and innovation (through regional development strategies, brain gain measures, poles of excellence)

Lithuanian scientists prepared the *White Book of Science and Technologies*. It sets clear objectives for scientists designing new technologies and innovations as well as objectives for state institutions preparing instruments promoting the use of scientific potential for industrial and economic development.

The system of state research institutes was reorganised, i.e. to promote the integration of science and studies, a system of university research institutes was created allowing a more effective use of the national research potential for study purposes.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the *Programme of Development of Advanced Technologies, Long-term Strategy for Development of Science and Technologies* (December 2003) and priority sectors for R&D. Funding was allocated for research in those sectors.

4.1.4. Promoting structural change at universities with a view of enhancing learning and innovation processes as well as internal management capacities

More effective use of resources

Designers of the draft plan of HE development propose that internal management of higher education institutions should be revised and study programmes should aim for quality, not quantity. The fragmentation of study programmes should be stopped and faculties should be enlarged. Studies of the same field should be concentrated in one faculty and not scattered across several faculties. This would ensure better use of intellectual and material resources.

International experts will be invited to evaluate activity of universities in different fields of studies, centres of excellence will be identified and Master and doctoral studies will be concentrated there. Designers of the draft plan are raising the issue of the size of state universities and colleges and their distribution in towns, since it is hardly expedient to maintain several similar higher education institutions in the same town.

Funding reform

The draft plan of higher education development calls for legalisation of three sources of funding for state higher education institutions: state, student and business (employers). State budget allocations constitute the major part of funding; additional funding is obtained from student contributions with guaranteed state loan to cover study costs, and employers' funds. At the same time, the draft plan foresees tax advantages on study loans for young specialists employed in Lithuanian enterprises. They would get a tax refund to cover the costs of the loan. Another aspect of the funding reform is reduction of the duration of studies. The suggestion is that, in general, both cycles – Bachelor and Master – should not exceed 5 years. This duration of studies is recommended in the Bologna declaration, which was signed by Lithuania together with 40 other states.

Conformity of study programmes with the labour market

It is important that graduates get jobs according to their profession and employers be willing to employ them. Thus, active cooperation of employers and higher education institutions is encouraged. Employers should be involved in the design of study programmes to ensure the training of skills needed in the labour market. According to the draft plan, employers and students should actively participate in councils of higher education institutions.

Cooperation

The draft plan recommends the establishment of the Council of Science and Technologies Policy, consisting of the Prime Minister, Ministers of Education and Science, Economy, Finance, representatives of academic community and business. It would allow coordinating the activity of state institutions responsible for science and innovation.

4.1.5. Promoting quality assurance and accreditation at institutional and system level (as part of the accountability of education/training institutions to society)

In promoting the quality of studies, special attention is devoted to the regulation, external assessment and accreditation of structure and content of study programmes. Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education is operating in Lithuania. In 2004 alone, external consecutive assessment of 91 study programmes was performed, out of which 29 study programmes were assessed by foreign experts, 50 study programmes were accredited, 32 new study programmes were included into the Register of Study/Training programmes.

Inventory of Procedures for Quality Assessment in Colleges Established, which is used for assessing the activity of colleges operating in accordance with the temporary statute, was approved by Order No. ISAK-315 of the Minister of Education and Science of 4 March 2004.

4.1.6. Making higher education more responsive to the implementation of principles of lifelong learning (by offering adapted programmes and providing non-degree courses, building bridges between university and non-university higher education, validating prior learning)

To implement the State Distance Education Development Programme, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2001, a project for the EU Structural Funds was prepared. While creating the Research and Study Information System, 22 successful projects for distance learning courses were supported; educational and technological materials for the distance courses were renewed. To promote consistent development of the Lithuanian Distance Learning Network, in 2004, equipment was purchased, 2 new small distance learning studios and 2 new classrooms were set up, and equipment was updated in two operating distance learning centres. The provision of non-degree courses, validation of prior learning is limited at HEI.

4.1.7. Partnerships of higher education and research institutions and the economy. Participation of higher education institutions in learning initiatives of cities and regions and their cooperation with social partners

The approval of *Business Innovation Programme, the Programme of Development of Science and Technology Parks* and model statutes of science and technology parks (STP) promoted STP development and, simultaneously, regional and national development, created conditions for faster implementation of innovations into national economy, closer co-operation of higher education, science and industry, and increased employment. At present, 7 STPs, established with participation of Lithuanian universities, are in operation.

In processing industry, 300 researchers and engineers are engaged in R&D. Thus, the main resources for the development of new technologies are universities and state research institutes. Development of ICT firms and implementation of advanced technologies require a favourable environment. This environment is created by clusters, which strengthen the co-operation of similar projects. The first attempts, and quite successful ones, have already been made. A biotechnology cluster, which has proved its competitiveness in the global product and science market, is operating in Lithuania. It comprises the Institute of Biotechnology and related enterprises: AB "Fermentas" (production of reagents for gene engineering and molecular biology), UAB "Biotechnika" (biopharmaceuticals), UAB "Biocentras" (ecological biotechnology), UAB "Biok" (producer of skin care products). "Fermentas" is exporting its products to 45 countries, including the USA, Japan, Germany, and France.

Business incubators (defined as public institutions, operating in the territory of one or several counties, which rent premises, technical and office equipment, and provide office and administrative services to economic entities on favourable terms) are operating. The main aim of business incubators is to reduce activity risk for starting and operating enterprises, to help weaker enterprises with good business ideas to enter and compete in the market. Like business information centres, business incubators also provide business information, consultation and training services necessary for starting up and developing a business. The first business incubator was registered in Kaunas in June 1998. Now the regional business incubator of Kaunas Technological University is one of the most successfully operating incubators in Lithuania. The activity of business incubators has a considerable effect on the economic situation and regional development. Until 2003, in business incubators over 860 new jobs had been created and about 150 enterprises incubated. At present, 7 business incubators are operating.

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

5.1. Strategic measures

5.1.1. The implementation at national level of the tools developed under the Copenhagen process (Europass, common principles for validation of non-formal learning, guidance and counselling, etc.)

Lithuania is preparing for the introduction of *Europass* certificate: Europass documents are being translated into Lithuanian; a working group for the preparation of the Diploma Supplement was set up. The institution responsible for the introduction of Europass in Lithuania is the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme co-ordination support fund.

The creation of quality assurance system for vocational training has started. It is based on self-assessment and external assessment. In 2003-2004, an external quality assessment model for vocational training programmes, rules of quality assessment for institutions, and self-assessment questionnaire for vocational schools were prepared. In the coming years, quality assurance system in vocational training will be developed by implementing the measures provided for in the Lithuanian SPD for 2004-2006.

Lithuanian legislation provides the basis for the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal education. The new edition of the Law on Education (approved in 2003) legalises the possibility of recognition of competencies acquired in a non-formal or informal way. The development of Knowledge and Skills

Assessment System, including those acquired in non-formal way, is stipulated by the Lithuanian SPD for 2004-2006.

In February 2004, in Lithuania an international seminar on “Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning“ was organised, in which Common European Principles for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning designed by the European Commission were presented to the representatives of Central and East European states. The seminar was initiated and funded by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and organised by the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training under the Ministry of Education and Science.

Career Guidance Strategy (2003) and the implementation plan (2004) were prepared and adopted. In 2004, a pilot version of Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS) software was created. It is based on a comprehensive, regularly updated Internet website¹⁴ of the Ministry of Education and Science in Lithuanian and English. The website contains official integrated information from education registers about universities, colleges, vocational schools, their study programmes and diplomas, and other information for pupils, teachers, employers and politicians. The piloted AIKOS website provides educational, labour market and statistical information on students in higher and vocational schools, on admission numbers, numbers of the unemployed and job vacancies according to sub-sectors and regions. This is the first attempt in Lithuania and Europe to correlate in one database the numbers of students, admission numbers and needs of the labour market. The development of vocational guidance and counselling system is stipulated by the Lithuanian SPD for 2004-2006.

5.1.2. Meeting the needs of socially disadvantaged groups

The Lithuanian SPD for 2004-2006 adopted measures for developing professional rehabilitation for the disabled, enhancing employability and integration into labour market for the unemployed, preventing social exclusion and promoting social integration.

In 2004, funds from the EC initiative EQUAL were allocated to 30 projects aiming to satisfy the needs of socially excluded groups.

5.1.3. Increasing the attractiveness of VET

The attractiveness of VET is increased by establishment of *regional vocational training* centres (for details see 2.2.1. and 3.1.3.) and development of the system of vocational information, counselling and guidance (for details see 5.1.1.) and decentralising the management of VET establishments (see 2.2.1. and 2.2.3.). Preliminary results of the piloted change of status of 8 vocational schools are positive: creation of more flexible management structures, increased opportunities for participation in international projects, stronger links with employers, positive changes in pupils' attitudes towards school as an educational institution, improved institutional image and regional recognition are observed.

5.1.4. VET conforming to the needs of the labour market

Industrial Lead Bodies are a key expert on ensuring the compliance of initial VET with the needs of economy. These groups are formed as tripartite partnerships based on equitable participation of employers, trade unions and educational institutions (3 of each). They are approved by the joint order of the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Social Security and Labour and operate under the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training. In total, there are 14 Industrial Lead Bodies.

Compliance of the vocational training curriculum with the needs of the market is regulated through VET standards (see 3.1.3.) and licensing of VET programmes.

The final qualification assessment is fully transferred to social partners (for details see 3.1.3.). Such assessment, separated from education, provides favourable conditions for quality improvement in vocational training and validation of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal way.

Since 2000 surveys of economic sectors have been conducted (see 3.1.3.) to identify the demand for training. The results of those surveys are used in forming curricular network, planning admission and updating of vocational training content. The upgrading of technological competence of vocational teachers improves the quality of vocational training and its compliance with economic needs. (see 2.2.2.).

In 2004, the creation of the system to monitor the compliance of vocational training with economic needs was started (methodology to monitor employment of graduates is being tested in the construction field).

5.1.5. The competence development of older workers

¹⁴ <http://www.aikos.smm.lt/>

In 2003, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange started the implementation of *55+ employment support programme* for the older unemployed with the aim of increasing their employment and opportunities for remaining on the labour market.

According to the data from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, in 2003, 2783 persons participated in vocational training programmes, and 6724 persons of 50 and over received consultations (see also 3.1.3.).

5.1.6. Reduction of barriers between VET, general education and higher education

The establishment of *technological gymnasiums* in vocational schools started. They provide upper secondary education and pre-vocational training, i.e. do not lead to a qualification or a profession. Pupils, having completed upper secondary education in the gymnasium, further can choose either to stay in vocational school (continue education and training according to IVET programmes provided by the school) or to enter higher education.

A network of *state colleges* (providers of non-university higher education) was formed (see 2.2.1.).

5.1.7. Competence development of vocational teachers and trainers

In 2002, the following *documents for the development of vocational teachers training system*: Conception for Vocational Teacher/Lecturer Education and Training in Lithuania and Professional Standard for Vocational Teacher/Lecturer were designed.

In 2002, the Vytautas Magnus University launched a modular programme of *initial training of vocational teachers*.

In 2004, the *upgrading of technological competence* of vocational teachers started (see 2.2.2.).

In 2004, the *Lithuanian Training of Trainers Network*, which is a part of the European network TTNET, was launched.

5.1.8. Identification of skills and competencies needs of the labour market

Future skills needs are partially identified through surveys of economic sectors (see 3.1.3. and 5.1.4.). It is foreseen to conduct a survey on early identification of skill needs in one sector of economy in 2005-2008.

5.2. Main obstacles for the implementation of vocational education and training initiatives

Main obstacles for the implementation of VET initiatives are as follows:

- insufficiently developed links between initial and continuing vocational education and training;
- insufficiently developed links between different levels of educational system;
- public attitude towards vocational education and training.

Main areas to be reformed through the implementation of VET initiatives are as follows:

- *increasing the attractiveness* of vocational education and training (possibilities for persons with vocational education background to enter higher education; tax incentives for employers supporting training and studies of their employees; establishment of a vocational training fund, which would be managed by employers on sectoral principle; increased student grants for those choosing professions needed on the labour market, but not popular among young people);
- improvement of practical training (establishment of practical training centres, where staff of educational and research institutions as well as company employees could upgrade their practical skills);
- preparation of the national qualifications system, including all levels of education;
- optimisation of the network of initial and continuing VET providers through the establishment of regional vocational education and training centres.

6. THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1. Promotion of mobility. Administrative and legal obstacles to mobility. Problems of recognition, reliability and transparency of competencies and qualifications

After Lithuania joined the EU in 2004, the budget of three programmes promoting mobility: Comenius, Erasmus, and Grundtvig has increased. In comparison with 2003, the funds for these programmes from the European Commission increased almost four times: from LTL 4.2 million in 2003 to LTL 14.8 million this year.

According to preliminary data, in 2004-2005, 1500 students participated in student exchange programme "Erasmus", which makes 300 more than last year. During the same period 600 lecturers participated in the exchange. In 2004, about 200 school groups went abroad on "Comenius" school exchange programme. In 2003, this number did not reach one hundred.

Lithuania is also becoming more attractive to students from other countries. The numbers of students coming to Lithuania on "Erasmus" programme are increasing. About 500 students came this academic year (2004-2005),

which is twice more than last year. Future teachers participating in the primary teacher-training project also show more active interest in Lithuania. “Comenius“ language assistants come to Lithuania from Germany, Italy, the UK and other countries.

Vocational schools and colleges actively participate in mobility projects: in 2003, the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme funded 58 mobility projects, in 2004, 52 mobility projects were funded. Future prospects are related to the creation of the national system of qualifications, which would comprise all levels of education, and the implementation of *Europass* system in Lithuania.

Main obstacles to academic mobility:

- lack of information on Lithuania and its higher education institutions;
- poor choice of study programmes in a foreign language;
- incompatibility of study programmes;
- lack of mechanisms of competence and qualification recognition;
- migration problems (complicated procedures of applying for and obtaining visas and residence permits);
- poor living conditions;
- image of the country.

6.2. Integration of the European dimension

6.2.1. What measures have been implemented in the country to ensure that pupils have by the end of their secondary education the competencies they need to adapt successfully in Europe and in the wider world?

Europass Language Passport was adapted for Lithuanian secondary school pupils (16-19) and piloted (1000 copies).

Two pilot projects devoted to integrated language and subject learning (Lithuanian-English, Lithuanian-French, Lithuanian-German) and bilingual learning (Lithuanian-Russian) are carried out.

Early foreign language learning is expanding, the number of pupils who choose to start learning English in the 2nd form at primary school is growing.

Teachers participate in the projects of Comenius programme. In 2004, 116 Comenius 2.2. applications (language and general courses, language assistants) received funding. Three primary teacher training projects were supported (24 students participated in the exchange within the framework of these projects). Comenius 1 „European school partnership projects“ funded 182 projects.

The renewed National Education Curriculum until 2007 will highlight the competencies, which pupils need to acquire by the end of their secondary education to become future citizens of their own country, Europe and the world. For more on competencies, see also 3.1.3.

6.2.2. What measures have been implemented to strengthen the European and intercultural dimension in the training of teachers?

The European dimension is integrated in the syllabi of different subjects. For example, Europe is chosen as an integrating theme in Learning about the World in the primary school curriculum, Geography in the basic curriculum, and in Foundations of Civic Education. Pupils discuss the role of Lithuania as an EU Member State, European integration processes, co-operation of the EU countries, cultural diversity, population mobility, preservation of ecological equilibrium. They discuss what it means to be a European, what are human, child and European values.

The Cross-Curricular Framework has been developed which includes learning-to-learn, communication, civic competence, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, healthy living and safe environment.

6.2.3. What other measures should the country implement to integrate the European dimension in education?

The greatest problem is the readiness of teachers to implement the new curriculum, use modern teaching/learning and assessment methods. Up till now teachers for the early and integrated foreign language and subject teaching are not trained.

The European dimension should be more thoroughly revealed in the educational content, teachers need more teaching materials and in-service training.

Integrated language and subject teaching should be expanded to ensure that pupils learn foreign languages at an earlier age and that there is a greater variety of languages offered (not only English, German and French).