

NATIONAL REPORT ON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (“ET 2020”)

CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL REFORMS PROGRAMME

QUESTION 1

Please provide a summary of the main education and training elements in your National Reform Programme (NRP)

Part three of Lithuania’s draft National Reform Agenda ‘Implementation of EU priorities 2020: smart growth of economy’ provides for increasing investments into scientific research and experimental development, reducing early school leaving, and maintaining the share of people with tertiary or equivalent education at a level of not lower than 40%.

Among the key national goals are reducing early school leaving rates and retaining the share of people with tertiary or equivalent education. The target pursued in EU is to reduce early leaving rates among 18-24 year olds whose education is not higher than the basic level to below 10% by 2020. In 2008, the share of early school leavers in Lithuania was 7.4%, in 2009 it went up to 8.7%, and in 2010 it was registered at 8.1%. However, there remain big differences between urban and rural areas (in 2010, 3.7% and 15.7% respectively), and between males and females (in 2010, 9.9% and 6.2% respectively).

The deterioration of the situation according to this indicator is believed to have been influenced by the global financial crisis and no big progress is therefore expected. The objective is to maintain the relatively good current situation. Lithuania will aim at keeping the share of early school leavers below 9% by 2020, which is also provided for in the National Education Strategy (2003) and at reducing the differences between urban and rural areas as well as the gender differences.

In reducing early school leaving of young people, Lithuania envisages the following priority goals:

- Develop the infrastructure of pre-school education and a variety of services;
- Reduce the quality differences in pre-primary and general education between regions (urban/rural), between boys and girls, and special educational needs persons;
- Improve the education support infrastructure and develop manifold services provided for socially vulnerable groups, for people with disabilities and special educational needs persons;
- Increase curriculum flexibility and create alternative opportunities to acquire basic and/or secondary education;
- Improve the infrastructure for practical vocational training at vocational education and training establishments;
- Develop students’ career management skills;
- Encourage young people to continue studies at vocational schools and obtain a marketable vocational qualification.

Priority actions will be implemented through:

Pre-school and Pre-primary Education Development Programme 2011-2013, Implementation Programme for the Provisions of National Education Strategy 2003-2012, National Vocational Guidance Programme, and Practical Vocational Training Resource Development Programme.

The National Education Strategy, endorsed in 2003, aims at increasing the number of people with a higher education, as in 2003 the share of 30-34 year olds who had obtained tertiary or equivalent education was only 25.2%. Due to the new variety of college and university programmes and the changing demands of the labour market, an increasing number of young people opted for studies at higher education institutions.

The share of 30-34 year olds with a higher education has been increasing each year in Lithuania: in 2009 it was 40.6%. It would not be easy to maintain the indicator above 40% by 2020 if young people choose vocational training more often or, if upon completing secondary education, they go straight into the labour market. However, there are no plans to significantly increase the indicator – Lithuania will aim at no less than 40% of 30-34 year olds with a tertiary or equivalent education by the year 2020. As tertiary education is becoming a mass phenomenon, there is a need for greater focus on quality objectives, on maintaining a high level of education among the population. In carrying out the education system reform, attention and investments are directed toward improvement in the quality of education.

With a view to maintaining the current share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary education attainment, Lithuania envisages the following priority areas:

- Enhancing the efficiency of the tertiary education system;
- Improving tertiary education quality and the match between education provision and the needs of the labour market, citizens and society at large;
- Continuing the tertiary education reform with a view of ensuring higher quality and a better match with the labour market demands;
- Pursuing internationalization of tertiary education;
- Promoting adult education and continuous studies in higher education institutions, including into the process under-represented social groups.

Priority actions will be implemented by: the National Curriculum for Higher Education, the Programme for Promotion of Internationalization in Higher Education, the Strategy for Securing Lifelong Learning.

CURRENT NATIONAL QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2015 and 2020¹

Indicators	Current situation	Projections for 2015	Projections for 2020
Progressive economic growth			
Indicator of increased investments into R&D , % GDP	0,84 %**	1,86 %	1,9 %
% share of 18-24 year olds who having attained basic education, do not continue learning	8,1 %***	Not more than 9 %	Not more than 9 %
% share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary or equivalent education attainment,	40,6 %**	40 %	40 %

** - 2009 m.

*** – 2010 m.

¹ http://www.ukmin.lt/lt/strategija/2020Europa/reformu_darbotvarke.pdf

EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

QUESTION 2

What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving? (e.g. data collection, surveys and research):

As stipulated in the Republic of Lithuania Law on Education, municipal executive authorities are in charge of organizing monitoring and keeping records of the children who live within the municipal territory and of ensuring that all the children participate in compulsory education programmes. In Lithuania education is compulsory until 16 years of age.

Until 2009 school attendance was monitored and records of children not attending school were kept by two institutions: the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (Statistics Lithuania), and the Ministry of Education and Science. They applied different methods, therefore the data received differed, too. The data were collected and processed in a non-automated way, information at the disposal of municipalities was not updated regularly, common agreement was not reached as to who falls into the category of a non - attendee.

On October 22, 2008, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the 'Description of the procedures for keeping records of children living within the municipal territory' [„Savivaldybės teritorijoje gyvenančių vaikų apskaitos tvarkos aprašas’] and since September 1, 2009, the keeping of records of non-attendees has been organised in a different way. The above document defines the concepts *not-learning child* and *non-attending pupil*. In 2010, an Information System of Not-learning Children and Non-attending Pupils was created, in which data about not learning children living in each municipal territory were accumulated, analyzed and regularly updated. Non-attendees who miss, during one month, more than half of lessons prescribed by the compulsory curriculum are also entered into the records of the information system.

On the national level, information on not-learning and non-attendance reasons is collected, stored and analyzed in the System. The analysis suggests that social and psychological issues are the most common reasons for non-attendance.

Currently, other problems related to non-attendance are under investigation. For example, the research 'Diversity of special needs education/self-education forms' (2010) has shown that there is a need to strengthen activities relevant for inclusive education, such as specialist assistance to families, stakeholder partnership in education. Research conducted on the peculiarities of the implementation of preventive programmes in general education schools of Lithuania has revealed that among topical problems in schools are non-attendance and alcohol abuse as well as rather frequently encountered smoking and bullying problems, that schools lack programmes on substance use, non-attendance and violence prevention.

2.2. Please indicate the areas of priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, educational sectors):

Non-attending children. Most municipal administrations have approved attendance monitoring procedures on the basis of which schools provide information to municipal education departments on the number of lessons missed without a valid excuse and on the absentee pupils. Municipal prevention coordination groups conduct monitoring of lessons missed without a valid excuse and visit the families of absentee children.

In dealing with the non-attendance problem, educational establishments work in close cooperation with juvenile inspectors, with pedagogical - psychological services specialists and children's rights protection department staff.

During the implementation of the state planning project 'Returning drop-outs to school' [„*Iškritusių iš mokyklos mokinių gražinimas*”], financed by the European Social Fund, an absentee record keeping system was created, recommendations for prevention of early leaving from education and training and for return of drop-outs to mainstream education system were developed and an alternative form of education – special activity groups for non-attenders and those attending school irregularly was tested. Such groups were set up in schools and pedagogical - psychological centres; conferences were held in municipalities for representatives of local government bodies, for the police, schools and pedagogical - psychological centres on the issues of non-attendance; two-day seminars were offered on team work in providing educational assistance to pupils as well as seminars on stimulating learning motivation during which 250 teachers and educational assistance specialists upgraded their qualification.

Under the state planning project 'Assistance to pupil efficiency and quality development' [„*Pagalbos mokiniui efektyvumo ir kokybės plėtra*”], which is financed by the European Social Fund and supported by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, crisis management teams of all general education institutions underwent training in crisis management principles and strategies. The training aimed at ensuring a safe learning environment.

Special needs children. To prevent special needs pupils' early leaving from education and training: school environment, education plans and curricula are adapted taking into consideration their special needs; psychological, special pedagogical and special assistance as well as compensatory technical equipment and special teaching aids are provided; taking into account pupils' special needs and capabilities, care is taken to create learning opportunities close to their home so that they could follow an integrated programme, be educated in a special education school/class, or at home. Also, education groups are organized for special needs children, where their social skills are shaped and developed; opportunities are provided for extending the time of the programme.

With a view to improving the quality of special needs pupils' education, several projects financed by ES structural funds and the Lithuanian government are being implemented. Special teaching tools have been developed to help pupils with special educational needs master the learning materials.

Under the project 'Development of education forms for special needs persons' [„*Specialiuju poreikių asmenų ugdymo(-si) formų plėtra*”] 70 special education counselors have been prepared to provide methodological assistance to general education teachers working with special educational needs pupils.

2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken at system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners:

Pursuant to the Provision of Pedagogical and Psychological Assistance Model, pedagogical psychological assistance to a non-attending pupil is provided in the environment closest to the child – in the school. Most schools have on staff social pedagogues, who are directly responsible for responding to non-attendance problems. School social pedagogues offer counselling to families, they organize social skills development groups for pupils having behaviour problems, implement prevention programmes and, together with the class teacher, visit the pupils' families. Quite often in addressing attendance problems, schools act in close cooperation with territorial

unit inspectors for juvenile affairs and the staff of municipal children's rights protection departments.

If a solution to the problem is not found or if the school does not have the necessary specialists, the municipality pedagogical psychological service is approached to identify the learning or behaviour problems of a child and to seek possible solutions. The services have on their staff special pedagogues, speech therapists, psychologists, neurologists. Both parents and teachers can approach pedagogical psychological services for assistance.

One of the most effective ways to address the non-attendance problem is monitoring lesson attendance and providing information about it to parents. Timely identification of the causes of non-attendance and opportune pedagogical social pedagogical and psychological assistance to the child and his/her parents are also very important.

Schools implement and run prevention programmes aimed at reducing manifestations of bullying and violent behaviour, suicides, addictions and other destructive habits. The programmes are meant to contribute to creating a safe learning environment in schools.

In 2010 the following programmes were under implementation in the educational institutions of Lithuania:

- ***Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme*** was implemented by 87 general education establishments, with over 6500 school staff participating;
- ***The Second Step*** programme was implemented by 245 establishments, with 530 pedagogues and 11 200 children (primary school pupils) participating;
- The ***Zippy's Friends*** programme was implemented by 552 educational establishments, with 1331 pedagogues and 22 614 children participating (pre-primary and first grade pupils);
- The ***Lions Quest*** programme was implemented by 56 general education schools.

Besides, schools have been launching other programmes (alcohol, tobacco and other psychotropic substances abuse prevention programme, the 'Linus – Helping a Child' [„*Linus – pagalba vaikui*”], 'Snowball' [„*Sniego gniūžtė*”] and also various preventive activities (actions, social skills development, participation in competitions, quizzes etc.).

On the national level, EU structural funds - supported projects are being implemented, aiming at structural changes of the system. Under these projects the infrastructure of schools is updated, new programmes (modules) and alternative education models are developed, tried out and implemented; classes (groups) are set up for work with not learning and non-attending children; teachers and education support specialists participate in professional development events aimed at making assistance provided to children with learning problems more efficient and at upgrading pedagogues' and education support specialists' competencies.

2009 saw the beginning of phase II of the project 'Provision of options for choosing a pathway for 14-19 year old': further differentiation and individualisation of learning in pursuance of quality in education that is necessary for the world of labour today. The project, which is due to come to an end in 2012, contributes to dropout prevention, it covers preparation and adjustment of education organization model guidelines, programmes, trainings, methodological recommendations and their dissemination. With the model guidelines, modular programmes and methodological recommendations for teaching entrepreneurship and work activities in place, the necessary conditions will be created for a wider choice of learning areas available to grade 9-10 pupils, for individualized teaching, for putting knowledge into practice, career management, reduction of learning loads and dropouts. The methodological tools developed will help to adjust

the education process; they will improve and will increase access to learning for pupils of various aptitudes, needs and capacities.

2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken:

Persons who have not obtained basic education have a possibility to continue education in adult or vocational schools. 24 youth schools have been operating in Lithuania since 1993. They are intended for pupils who have learning motivation or social adaptation problems, who tend to drop out from the mainstream education system or, because of socio-economic reasons, do not attend general education schools. The tasks and challenges facing the youth school in Lithuania have been changing and it necessary to introduce certain corrections into its vision and to change society's negative attitude toward these schools and their pupils

In 2009 the 'Alternative education project', a constituent part of the national 'School improvement programme plus' (2008-2013), was launched with a view to systematic strengthening of youth schools. The goal of the project is to create conditions that would ensure access to basic education for the largest possible number of learners and to enable them to continue learning and obtain secondary education as well as marketable qualification. The Project falls into two stages: measures developed during its first stage (2009-2011) are going to be implemented in schools in the second stage (2011-2013). The Project contributes to the realization of the provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012, among which are: transition to an education structure which would be based on flexible programmes and not on closed school models, which can be achieved by implementing different general education and vocational training programmes and modules, by increasing learner mobility through a wider choice between various schools and programmes, by combining formal, non-formal and informal education, by opening schools to labour market and developing their social and cultural functions. During the execution of the project the quality of educational services and their availability are elaborated, the interface between general education, vocational education and training and higher education is improved. Among the most effective tools developed through the Project are three-type 'Descriptions of Youth Centres' [„*Jaunimo namų aprašai*”] and 'Productive Learning Model' [„*Produktyviojo mokymosi modelis*”].

Descriptions of Youth Centres is designed to facilitate successful adaptation to society of children with no previous convictions who are likely to develop various addictions, children with emotional and behavioural problems as well as children who need their spiritual well-being uplifted and learning motivation restored.

The *Productive Learning Model* is intended to help children who have learning problems or have dropped out of the education system to socialize, to find their place in the system through work activities they have chosen and find attractive which help them realize the practical value of learning. Productive learning is based on individual work, learning in a group and in a real life environment under the guidance of a teacher. Learners' choice of the practical activity and the learning area depend on how important they find them for themselves; thus individualized syllabus becomes inalienable part of learning.

TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

QUESTION 3

What measures has your country taken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment ?

3.1 Measures to increase entry rates to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups:

In 2010, the share of persons enrolled in tertiary education compared to the population of 18 year olds was around 60% (*gross* coverage of entry rates). During several recent years it has not been decreasing. The key provisions relating to ensuring tertiary education access are stipulated in the new Law on Research and Higher Education (2009):

- The choice of state-financed places by way of competition according to the learning outcomes (in joint admission to all state and non-state run colleges and universities);
- Social scholarships, which are allocated in a centralized way through the State Studies Foundation and incentive scholarships awarded from the state budget allocations designated for higher education;
- State-supported loans awarded in a centralized way through the State Studies Foundation;
- Targeted scholarships awarded from the state budgetary funds to students following initial teacher training programmes;
- Financial support to students with disabilities (awarded to all with a view of covering the special needs expenses, and, where applicable, to cover part of the study cost);
- A system of privileges (in transport, compulsory health insurance, income tax areas);

Making use of EU Structural Funds support intended for HEI infrastructure improvement, the existing infrastructure is obligatorily adjusted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Through various Structural Funds supported projects the circle of participants in higher education is expanded by including underrepresented social groups, and life-long education is promoted.

3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education:

In 2009, the share of 30-35 year olds with a higher education reached 40.6%. Lithuania will endeavour to keep it at 40% at least.

The key provisions relating to this goal are set out in the new Law on Research and Higher Education adopted in 2009:

- Reimbursement of part of the study cost paid by students who because of poor performance voluntarily terminate their studies or, following the established procedures, are expelled from HEI;
- Provision of opportunities for students to change the study programme within the same study area, in the same or in another HEI, without losing the remaining part of state funding.
- Reimbursement of part of the cost of studies to fee-paying students who complete the study programme with the best performance record;
- HEI assessment, one of the stages of which is compliance of real resources with the minimum requirements for the conditions and organization of higher education (one of its indicators is a change in student population or ‘dropouts’)
- Among other measures is increasing accessibility and attractiveness of 2nd and 3^d cycle studies by financing part of the degree awarding study places through various national comprehensive programmes intended for higher education, research and business integration.

Indirect measures implementing the HE reform principles laid down in the 2009 Law on Research and Higher Education include:

- Increasing the efficiency of the higher education system (the legal status of HEIs, their governance and accountability principles; consolidation of their network, changes in research and higher education funding patterns);
- Upgrading higher education quality (assessment of the performance of research and higher education institutions, curriculum revision etc.);
- Increasing internationalization of higher education (various Structural Funds supported projects).

QUESTION 4

What measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?

Lithuania participates in the EC *Lifelong Learning Programme*, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Government of Lithuania financed *NordPlus Framework Programme* and implements Structural Funds supported projects, among the key objectives of which is promoting mobility of people in all age groups.

According to the data provided by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation, approximately 1000 vocational school learners and vocational training specialists (profession instructors, administration staff) participate in mobility projects every year.

In 2010, special funds were allocated from the state budget to support research and higher education institutions' activities relating to launching, implementation and development of EU programmes and to organizing student, academic and other staff mobility (mobility-related visits to HEIs in other countries, participation in international networks, seminars, trainings, conferences).

4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults):

International mobility of students is promoted and supported by a number of international programmes:

- On the general education level: the Lifelong Learning programme (LLP) sub-programme *Comenius* and the *NordPlus Junior* sub-programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers' *NordPlus Framework Programme*;
- On the vocational education and training level: the LLP sub-programme *Leonardo da Vinci*;
- On the tertiary education level: the LLP sub-programme *Erasmus*, the Academic Exchange Programme and the *NordPlus Higher Education* sub-programme;
- On the adult education level: the LLP sub-programme *Grundtvig* and the *NordPlus Adult* sub-programme.

These programmes offer opportunities for learner exchange and work placements in LLP participating countries, for students' partial, basic, Master's and doctoral studies in LLP participating countries and in the countries with which Lithuania has signed bilateral cooperation agreements.

Information on the opportunities to participate in these programmes is published in the Education Exchanges Support Foundation website²).

² www.smpf.lt

2010 saw further implementation of EU higher education programmes and projects, among which were the LLP *Erasmus* sub-programme, the *Erasmus Mundus* and *Tempus* programmes, the *Bologna Project*, which on the national level are coordinated by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation. *Erasmus* mobility programme has enabled Lithuanian higher education establishments and scientific research institutions which have the right to organize, in conjunction with universities, doctoral studies to carry out exchange programmes and send students, academic and other staff to foreign HEIs and enterprises. According to interim statistical reports provided by higher education institutions on mobility implemented in the academic year 2009-2010, 3002 students spent, under various *Erasmus* schemes, a study or practice period in higher education institutions and enterprises of other countries.

In 2000 the international exchange programme 'Youth for Understanding' was launched in Lithuania. 'YFU Lietuva' programme is organized and carried out by the association 'International pupil exchange'. Currently, the association has 50 volunteers, who are mainly former participants of the exchange programme. They contribute to its development in Lithuania with their ideas and work and acquire new experience in IFU in Lithuania as well as at international seminars and trainings. For 2011-2012 school year 'IFU Lietuva' offers pupil placements in 17 countries in Europe, North and South America, and Asia.

4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)?

Teachers and other educational professionals on all levels of education enjoy opportunities to collaborate with their foreign colleagues and to upgrade their qualification by participating in the following international programmes:

- General education teachers have an opportunity to participate in mobility visits under cooperation projects, in staff exchange, preparatory visits, qualification upgrading courses, all of which are supported by the *Comenius* and *NordPlus Junior* programmes;
- The teaching staff of vocational schools upgrade their qualification by participating in the *Leonardo da Vinci* mobility and partnership projects;
- The academic staff of higher education institutions participate in the *Erasmus*, Academic exchange and *NordPlus Higher Education* programmes;
- Adult educators improve their competencies by participating in LLP *Grundtvig* qualification upgrading courses, in partnership projects and in the *NordPlus Adult Education* sub-programme activities.

Participation of teachers in international exchange, placements and projects is a nationally recognised way of upgrading their qualification and it is taken into consideration during their performance appraisal and attestation. Teacher mobility programmes are carried out in accordance with the international agreements Lithuania has signed, e.g. the European Union programmes, Pestalozzi programme, visits to the Centre for modern languages in Graz and others.

According to the data provided by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation, every year about 500 teachers from vocational education and training institutions participate in *Leonardo da Vinci* mobility projects. As can be seen from the programme impact assessment review and the performance monitoring report, during these projects vocational teachers upgrade their professional skills, familiarize themselves with new teaching methods and technologies. The results are applied in updating training programmes, in developing new modules, teaching materials and teaching aids.

Implementation of mobility projects is based on bilateral and multilateral agreements. Nearly all vocational education and training establishments have signed cooperation agreements with various foreign education institutions (e.g. Bielorrussia, Norway, Germany and other European Union countries).

In 2010 Education Exchanges Support Foundation implemented actions assigned under *Internationalisation of Higher Education* programme³. The Foundation announced 27 competitions for partial studies and research internships of the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania in the following countries: Denmark, Bielorrussia, Japan (Japanology and BA as well as postgraduate studies), Island, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Latvia, Hungary, China, Mexico, Israel, Slovakia, Switzerland, Germany, Turkey. 323 citizens of the Republic of Lithuania submitted applications for studies and research internships abroad in 2010-2011 academic year. The Education Exchange Support Foundation concluded study/research internship agreements with 121 applicants. Applications for study/research internship in Lithuania were submitted by 122 foreign citizens, 99 of them were awarded state grants.

According to interim statistical reports provided by higher education institutions on mobility implemented in 2009-2010, 1179 academic and personnel staff were granted an opportunity, under various *Erasmus* actions, to spend some time teaching or studying in higher education institutions, enterprises or organizations abroad. In 2010, representatives of 11 HEIs received funding for preparatory visits to their partner organizations.

In 2010, applications to organize *Erasmus intensive language courses* in 2010-2011 were submitted by 10 research and higher education institutions of Lithuania. Seven of these were shortlisted and were granted financing.

Erasmus Intensive programmes carried out in Lithuania bring together students and teaching staff from various universities of participating countries. They aim at creating conditions for students and teachers to work together in multinational groups, to benefit from special teaching and learning environment, to gain new perspectives on the topic being studied and to share experiences on the curricula content and the study programme methodology.

4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility?

Among the main obstacles to learning mobility are:

Poor command of foreign languages, which often prevents older people from participating in international mobility programmes. To overcome this obstacle, additional funding has been allocated for linguistic preparation. The teaching staff of general education and adult education institutions can improve their foreign language knowledge and skills at *Comenius* and *Grundtvig* qualifications upgrade courses and during multilateral partnership projects. Like most EU countries, Lithuania organises *Erasmus Intensive Language Courses*, providing an opportunity for students to learn less widely used and less taught languages.

Another major problem is limited funding of learning mobility. It cannot meet the high demand for incoming and outgoing mobility. In some cases applicants are granted funding which does not cover subsistence costs and they have to look for additional sources of funding.

³ Resolution of the Republic of Lithuania Government No732 (2008) 'On Approval of the 2008-2010 Programme for Promotion of Internationalisation of Higher Education' (Official Gazette No 85-3384, 2008) [*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2008-07-09 nutarimas Nr 732 „ Dėl aukštojo mokslo tarptautiškumo skatinimo 2008-2010 metų programos patvirtinimo ”*]

Persons with special needs are encouraged to participate in all the programmes by setting appropriate national priorities. Besides, upon substantiating the need for it, additional funding can be granted for the accompanying person or to cover other necessary costs.

NEW SKILLS AND JOBS

QUESTION 5

What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?

- In 2011, a study named ‘OECD PISA survey philosophy and secondary data analysis, 2006’² was launched. The study analysed the future skills in science literacy, as defined by the PISA survey, and evaluated the differences contained in the current national programme.
- In August 2010, a brief analysis of the educational problem ‘Achievements in mathematics and science study: Lithuanian pupils’ competencies in the global context’³ [‘*Gamtos ir matematikos mokslų pasiekimai: Lietuvos mokinių gebėjimai pasauliniame kontekste*’] was prepared. The analysis presented an evaluation of Lithuanian 4th and 8th grade pupils’ achievements in TIMSS mathematics and science study and outlined key trends of change in the international context by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the above-mentioned pupils’ competencies in mathematics and science subjects.
- Since 2009, following the launch of the European Social Fund-supported School Improvement Programme Plus (ESF MTP+) project ‘Provision of options for choosing a learning pathway for students aged 14–19, phase II: wider differentiation and individualisation of learning to achieve the quality of education needed for today’s world of labour’⁴ [‘*Mokymosi krypties pasirinkimo galimybių didinimas 14–19 metų mokiniams, II etapas: gilesnis mokymosi diferencijavimas ir individualizavimas, siekiant ugdymo kokybės, reikalingos šiuolaikiniam darbo pasauliui*’] (implementation period 2009–2012), effort has been made to develop wider possibilities for pupils aged 14–19 to choose a learning pathway by way of differentiated or individualised curriculum content. Much attention is paid to the improvement of methodology for the assessment of individual students’ learning outcomes (both general and subject-related competencies).
- As part of the implementation of the ESF-funded MTP+ project ‘Development of the basic competencies in pupils of the basic education first centre (grades 5–8)’⁵ [‘*Pagrindinio ugdymo pirmojo koncentro (5–8 kl.) mokinių esminių kompetencijų ugdymas*’] (implementation period 2009–2012), a tool for the assessment of the learning to learn competence and methodological guidelines for its application are being drawn up.
- In 2010, Lithuanian schools started using the Council of Europe accredited (validated) European Language Portfolio⁶ for the assessment of linguistic competencies in grades 5–8. European Language Portfolios for Grades 5–8 and 9–12⁷ are freely available online to every learner and teacher.

² OECD PISA tyrimo filosofija ir 2006 m. antrinė duomenų analizė. [OECD PISA survey philosophy and secondary data analysis, 2006] Vilnius, 2011.

³ http://www.smm.lt/svietimo_bukle/docs/pr_analize/sv_problema_6.pdf

⁴ <http://www.upc.smm.lt/projektai/kryptis/>

⁵ <http://www.upc.smm.lt/projektai/koncentras/>

⁶ Europos kalbų aplankas Lietuvos bendrojo lavinimo mokyklų 5-8 klasių mokiniams. Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija, [European Language Portfolio for Grades 5–8]. Ministry of Education and Science, 2008.

⁷ Europos kalbų aplankas Lietuvos bendrojo lavinimo mokyklų 9-12 klasių mokiniams. Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija [European Language Portfolio for Grades 9–12], Ministry of Education and Science, 2007.

- Since April 2009, the National Examination Centre has been implementing the second phase of the MTP+ project ‘Improvement of the system for assessment of the basic education outcomes and matura examinations’⁸ [*Pagrindinio ugdymo pasiekimų patikrinimo ir brandos egzaminų sistemos tobulinimas*]. The project is intended to improve assessment of language skills, linking exams in foreign languages with the application of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and introduction of a School Leaving (Maturity) Piece of Work⁹ in mainstream schools of general education.
- In February 2009, the ESF-funded project ‘Development of standardised tools of pupils’ assessment and self-assessment for general education schools’¹⁰ [*Standartizuotų mokinių pasiekimų vertinimo ir įsivertinimo įrankių bendrojo lavinimo mokykloms kūrimas*] was launched for implementation. The goal of the project is to expand the ability of Lithuanian general education schools to assess pupil outcomes, ensuring a better feedback of the educational process and a more accurate evaluation of the performance of both teachers and schools. In this project, a particular focus is laid on the creation of tasks related to the assessment of problem-solving skills.

5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010):

- In order to help pupils achieve a higher proficiency in foreign languages, ESF-funded projects designed for the promotion of *Content and Language Integrated Learning* have been launched in schools implementing general education curricula.
- In higher education, provisions relating to improvement of forecasting of skills to be required in the future were specified in the new Law on Higher Education and Research (2009) and implemented in the course of the higher education reform. As a result, the requirements for study programmes and the way for their implementation to create conditions for the development of student-oriented training were approved and European higher education quality assurance principles on evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and institutions providing them introduced. The provisions set out in the Law are further detailed in secondary legislation accompanying the Law and implemented with the use of funds from the European Social Fund through various projects (including development of description of study cycles and study areas, deployment of the European Credit Transfer System, transformation of study programmes in accordance with the newly approved requirements (student-oriented training), implementation of the National Qualifications Framework incorporating the higher education qualifications in the design and development of entrepreneurship education for students). *See also Question 5 (point 1) and Question 5.2. (point 5).*

5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance:

- In May 2010, the project ‘Creation and development of models for education career services and their monitoring in general education and vocational education and training’¹¹ [*Ugdymo karjerai paslaugų ir stebėsenos modelių sukūrimas ir plėtra bendrajame lavinime ir profesiniame mokyme*] was launched for implementation. In the course of the project, a monitoring system to ensure high quality and efficient provision of education career services is to be developed and put in place. The system would not

⁸ <http://www.egzaminai.lt/49/>

⁹ The purpose of the School Leaving (Maturity) Piece of Work is to assess different aspects of the core skills in general and selected subjects acquired by the school leaver in particular.

¹⁰ <http://www.upc.smm.lt/projektai/standartizuoti/>

¹¹ <http://kps.lmitkc.lt/lt/projektai/1/>

only allow monitoring of education career activities and their results but also ensure timely elimination of any shortcomings revealed.

- The results of the future skills survey conducted in 2008 (see Question 5) were used in forecasting levels of students' admission to vocational schools and higher education establishments in 2009.
- In 2010, the Qualifications and Vocational Training Development Centre performed an analysis designed to estimate how much attention was devoted to environmental issues in the curriculum of formal vocational education and training and how much attention those issues actually required. In the same year, guidelines for the improvement of entrepreneurial training as a subject in the curriculum of formal vocational education and training were drawn up.
- The key provisions relating to the use of outcomes in planning the study process were specified in the Law on Higher Education and Research in 2009. Since 2009, these provisions have been applied in planning the training of highly qualified professionals in higher education: in the first cycle, the principle of 'money follows the student' has been adopted, which means that students are chosen based on their learning outcomes; in the second cycle the choice depends on their performance in science or arts, the number of student places in the first cycle and the state budget allocations, whereas in the third cycle on the performance in science or arts (scientific /artistic activities) and the results of PhD studies.
- In 2010, with the view of the needs for the country's economic, social and cultural development in planning the training of specialists, a research study named 'Mapping the needs for specialists and skills'¹² [*Specialistų ir kompetencijų poreikio žemėlapis studija*] was undertaken. The purpose of this research was to prepare a study the findings of which were to be used in developing a map of the needs for specialists and skills by the economic sectors for the period 2011–2016 and also continuing to address the shaping of the public policy framework on forecasting and satisfying the needs for specialists and skills.

EDUCATION BUDGETS

QUESTION 6

How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?

Cuts in the budget led to certain changes in the teachers' payment system. As a result, minimum and maximum rates of position-based payment for teachers' work were introduced. This helped achieve a better coordination between the teachers' payment system and available funds.

Some programmes (such as the 'Long-term programme of increasing the payment for the teaching staff') were suspended. On 26 August 2009, taking into account the deteriorating economic situation in the country and seeking to comply with the commitments and priorities specified in the Programme of the 15th Government, the Lithuanian Government adopted a resolution 'On the approval of the long-term programme of increasing the payment for the teaching staff'. The resolution stated that starting from 1 January 2011 any decision to increase the teachers' salary would be subject to availability of public finances and depend on changes in the average monthly salary.

Even in a situation of economic difficulties, the state continues to take care of families with school-age children that are bearing the brunt of most socio-economic difficulties they

¹² http://www.smm.lt/naujienos/docs/pranesimai/Zemelapio_studija-galutine_ataskaita.pdf

encounter. To support families raising school-age children and provide pupils with nourishing meals at school, the Law on Social Assistance to Pupils contains provisions specifying that children from low-income families are entitled to free meals and provision of supplies before the start of the new school year. Under the Law, the right to receive social support is granted to pupils studying according to the preschool education or general education (primary, basic, secondary or special) curricula at general education schools, vocational schools, pre-school educational institutions and with other educational providers.

Within the higher education and research sector, due to the reduction of the state budget allocations for salaries and social security, the rates of remuneration for researchers, other research specialists, teaching staff members and management of higher education and research institutions were adjusted: the ceiling of coefficients applicable to position-based salaries and rates applicable to bonuses and premiums paid from the state budget were reduced, with the base salary rate of 0.965 introduced as a basis for calculating the amount of official position-based salaries.

As a result of the difficult economic situation of the state, the implementation of the programme for higher education and research staff salary increases for 2009-2012 was suspended. The Lithuanian Government adopted resolutions stipulating that from 1 January 2011 salary increases for the staff of higher education and research institutions would be subject to availability of public finances and would vary depending on changes in the average monthly salary.

In drawing up the higher education and research budget for 2010, the basic financial resources provided from the state budget for the economic and administrative expenses of state higher education and research institutions were significantly reduced.

In 2009, the reform of higher education financing was launched based on the principle of the 'student's basket'. Unlike previously, state funding is currently allocated for students and not for higher education institutions. Students, therefore, can take their basket to any Lithuanian higher school. The chief outcome of this transformation is the fact that the volume of publicly funded education (the number of publicly funded places) is now balanced with the financial possibilities of the state budget (since 2009, the amount of financing for a single first-year student who is a holder of a state-funded study place has doubled, as compared with 2008). Study prices are set by the higher education institutions themselves and the financing of studies now covers the actual costs incurred. The 'student's basket' principle has provided opportunities for top achievers to get access to public funding, irrespective of what form of studies (permanent or extended) they follow. Before the reform, no access to state funding was provided to part-time and extra-mural students, regardless of how well they studied.

From 2011, top achievers among students who studied in places not funded by the state will be granted, in an order established by the Lithuanian Government, reimbursement for the tuition fee they paid. To this end, additional funds have been allocated from the state budget. According to the estimations, approximately 5 percent of the first cycle students and those following permanent studies will be eligible for reimbursement of the tuition fee paid on completion of the first half of the study programme.

Since the autumn semester of 2010, the payment of targeted scholarships awarded to students following initial teacher training programmes was initiated. These scholarships amount to EUR 400 per month.

LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

QUESTION 7

What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?

7.1. Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down):

The Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning was approved by ministerial order No. ISAK-2795/A1-347 issued jointly by the Ministers of Education and Science and Social Security and Labour on 15 October 2008. The document amended ministerial order No. ISAK-433/A1-83 'Regarding the approval of the Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning and the Action Plan for its Implementation' issued by the Ministers of Education and Science and Social Security and Labour on 26 March 2004. The Strategy is available online at the following weblink:
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=329216&p_query=&p_tr2=

7.2. Please briefly refer to the main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training:

The Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in conjunction with other institutions under their subordination (including the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, Education Development Centre, Qualifications and Vocational Training Development Centre, Education Exchanges Support Foundation, Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Centre of Information Technologies in Education, etc.) and also, in part, by other ministries and public authorities, municipal administrations, adult education centres, schools, general education schools with adult education classes, vocational schools, higher education institutions and other social partners.

The Ministry of Education and Science develops legal acts regulating non-formal adult education, coordinates the activities of state and municipal providers of non-formal adult education and defines their priorities aligning them with regional development programmes, initiates projects for the systemic development of non-formal adult education institutions and improvement of their financing, commissions and finances non-formal adult education programmes, targeted projects and research, organises the process of adult education providers' professional development and provides information and advice to legal and natural persons interested in adult education.

The Ministry of Economy is responsible for the implementation of human resources development policies, it promotes adult education network activities relating to vocational education and continuous professional development of the unemployed and workers facing redundancy and also of people in employment and representatives of socially disadvantaged groups. It commissions and supports education programmes, targeted projects and research that help adults get adapted to the labour market needs.

Other ministries, government institutions and local authorities organise and coordinate the activities of non-formal adult education institutions under their jurisdiction. They also commission and support non-formal adult education programmes and targeted projects.

Certain specific functions are carried out by institutions under subordination of various ministries. For example, the Education Development Centre implements national adult education

and continuing education programmes and projects, collects data on adult education opportunities and institutions providing such services and programmes, offers electronic storage facilities for e-learning programmes and objects, provides information to the general public, undertakes studies on the national status and needs of adult education and carries out research projects related to the development of adult education opportunities.

In the area of lifelong learning, an important role goes to associations (NGOs). For example, in order to incorporate more social partners in the process of ensuring the implementation of lifelong learning, the Ministry of Education has signed a cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Association of Adult Education and Lithuanian Association of Heads of Adult Education Centres. In 2007, in order to coordinate the activities of institutions providing adult education, a Commission of Adult Education Experts was set up for considering adult education and lifelong learning strategy and tactics, organisation of the adult learning process, curriculum and other adult education-related issues.

In many educational institutions of the country, the technical state of the buildings and engineering equipment do not meet the existing construction requirements. In 2008–2013, while implementing the EU Structural Funds supported projects under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, the amount of about LTL 9 million was invested in the development of vocational guidance infrastructure and another investment of about LTL 56 million is planned for 2008–2013. Over the period of 2004–2013, the total investment in vocational education and training infrastructure is to amount to about one billion Lit. In 2007–2013, within the framework of the School Improvement Program Plus, it is planned to develop 96 new-type multi-functional centres in rural areas.

In terms of financial support, the focus is on adult education orientated to the needs of the labour market. Therefore, there is a growing need to strengthen, through various funding mechanisms, the development of non-formal non-vocational adult education provision. Non-formal non-vocational adult education is funded by both public and other institutions, including national and EU programmes (e.g. Grundtvig), foundations, civic organisations and the like. The three main pillars for providing State support for adult education are as follows: direct funding of educational institutions, funding of particular educational projects and programmes offered by the State or local authorities, individuals or groups; provision of public facility rental and tax relief, promotion of charity and education support through the tax system, partial or complete funding of education for socially disadvantaged people, support to adult education participants through subsidies (grants); and provision of learners with information and publications free of charge in public libraries. Public institutions most often provide financing to non-formal adult education programmes either through targeted grants or through project selection by way of a bidding process. Formal adult education institutions – adult education schools, training centres and general education schools with classes for adult pupils – are financed based on the pupil's basket and the methodology for calculating the number of notional students approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Investments from the EU Structural Funds remain one of the largest sources of financing for lifelong learning services. One of the key priorities for the allocation of EU Structural Funds has been the improvement of availability and quality of educational and scientific services. Funds have been allocated to projects designed for upgrading the infrastructure of educational institutions, vocational training, higher education and research, as well as to the development of lifelong learning. These funds have been used to start the development of the national qualifications framework in compliance with the needs of the labour market, develop the vocational training standards, encourage young people to stay in education and acquire a professional qualification and also to organise a variety of adult training courses.

Lithuanian law provides for specific exemptions for certain categories of learners, education providers and educational institutions. The Lithuanian Labour Code provides for a study leave which learners may take upon agreement with the employer. The Republic of Lithuania Law on Value Added Tax provides for exemptions for certain types of educational services, including VAT exempt provision of early childhood education and care and pre-primary preparatory education, primary, basic and secondary education, higher education and provision of qualifications, non-formal education of children, initial and continuing vocational education and training, where those services are provided by legal persons entitled to deliver them according to the order established by law. Various educational institutions – the potential beneficiaries – have another opportunity to raise additional funds. Since 2003, at the end of the tax period, Lithuanian residents have a right to have 2 percent of their income tax paid transferred, through the tax administration, to certain recipients of assistance, as specified in the law. Among others, those recipients often turn out to be institutions providing their services in the area of lifelong learning.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS

QUESTION 8

What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2–7? (Please indicate relevant priority area and give a short description)

Enhancing access and quality in early childhood education and care. In recent years, Lithuania has been making rapid progress in improving its institutional coverage of preschool education, but in 2009 the level of 68 percent of four-year-olds involved in preschool education was still lower than in the neighbouring countries. In particular, very large differences still remain between the opportunities to attend kindergartens for children in urban and rural residential areas, children from disadvantaged families and disabled children. In 2010, 53.3 percent of children attended preschool education, of whom about 69 percent in urban and 22.2 percent in rural areas.

In order to reduce access inequalities between urban and rural areas, two EU SF-funded projects for the improvement of preschool education infrastructure have been underway since 2009: ‘The establishment and development of universal multifunction centres’ for the purpose of adapting buildings in rural areas for provision of preschool education (76 such centres are to be established by 2012), ‘Investments in preschool institutions’ under which 110 kindergartens are planned to be renovated and modernised and groups for the care of infants set up in large towns by 2012 and ‘Development of early childhood education and care and pre-primary preparatory education’ designed for improvement of teachers’ and managers’ skills.

In order to improve access to preschool education, from 1 January 2011, the ‘preschool basket’ was introduced. As a public subsidy, it is allocated to municipalities depending on the number of children attending a preschool education institution, irrespective of its subordination – public or private. The basket funds are allocated to cover up the costs of no fewer than 20 hours of education per week. The remaining part of the funds is allocated by the founders of preschool educational institutions (in Lithuania, usually the local government) and parents. The size of the basket is currently the same for all children, except children with special needs who are granted a 35 percent bigger basket. The preschool basket is expected to stabilize the crisis-impaired funding of municipal preschool institutions, create conditions for the development of preschool education (including private provision), promote the diversity of educational organisation forms and a healthy competition between municipal and private educational institutions, as well as reduce inequalities in access to education between urban and rural residential areas.

Lithuania's sector of early childhood education and care is nearly all public: in 2009 and 2010, private and community kindergartens were attended by only 0.5 percent of children attending early childhood education and care institutions. In order to expand the private sector and thus increase the variety of preschool education and its accessibility, conditions (hygiene and other requirements) for establishment of kindergartens were simplified in the second half of 2010.

The National Programme for the Development of Preschool and Pre-Primary Preparatory Education for 2011–2013 adopted on 1 March 2011 is also designed for enhancing access and quality in early childhood education and care. It provides a set of measures supposed to encourage introduction of more flexible working hours of preschool institutions and more diverse forms of their organisation and develop provision of mobile educational assistance to preschool-age children and their families as well as increase the targeted financial support for the staff of preschool educational institutions, etc.

Developing the basic skills (linguistic and mathematical literacy), making science and technology more attractive and improving language skills. The upgraded core curricula for the teaching of Lithuanian in primary and basic education place a particular focus on the goal of developing learners' linguistic literacy. The major aspects for the upgrade are directed at developing the curriculum content on the basis of competence acquisition and integration of communication and learning to learn skills into all subjects.

The updated core curricula for the teaching of foreign languages in primary and basic education have introduced early foreign language teaching: the compulsory teaching of the first foreign language in primary schools is to start from grade 2 (it used to start from grade 4 under the former curriculum) and of the second foreign language from grade 5 of basic schools (it used to start from grade 6 under the former curriculum). The scope of foreign languages for learners to choose from is widening: at the basic school, learners are offered and are now learning a wider range of languages (English, French, Russian, German, Spanish and also languages of the neighbouring countries, including Polish, Latvian, etc.)

The updated core curriculum for the teaching of foreign languages is more accurately oriented at ET levels of language proficiency, which allows a more efficient use of the existing teaching resources. Development of new teaching materials reflecting the current trends in foreign language teaching and enabling to achieve better results in learning a foreign language (languages) is also underway. Provision of supplies, including innovative technologies, also helps create better conditions for language learning at schools.

In the updated core curriculum for the teaching of foreign languages in secondary schools, the teaching of the first foreign language is oriented at ET B1 and B2 levels of language proficiency and the teaching of the second foreign language at A2.

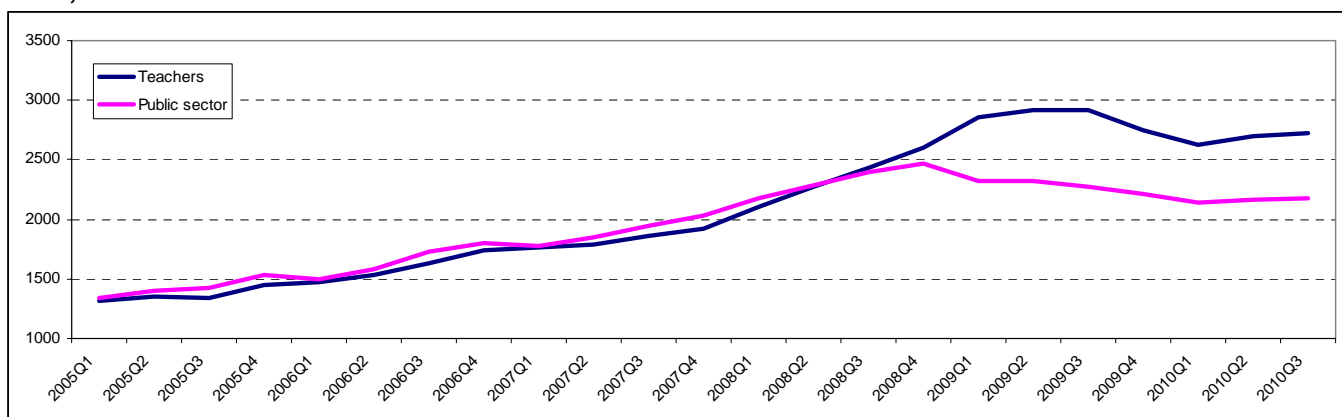
Implementation of the EU SF-funded project named 'Young Researcher' has significantly contributed to the process of making science subjects more attractive. Research conducted by pupils in the course of this project shows children's own skills in this field and motivates them to choose it as a promising field for their further studies. Likewise, the future activities within the SF-funded project named 'Development science teachers' competencies' will include environmental studies that will be carried out in the natural environment, enabling them to learn more about nature and how to cherish it.

To enhance the attractiveness of teaching mathematics, use is made of activities related to the EU SF-funded project named 'Provision of options for choosing a learning pathway for students aged 14–19, phase II: wider differentiation and individualisation of learning to achieve the quality of education needed for today's world of labour'. Pupils will be able to choose modules

that are to be prepared during the course of this project according to their fields of interests and capabilities.

Changes in initial teacher training and continuous professional development and enhancing the prestige of the teacher’s profession. In recent years, the prestige of the teacher’s profession has been raised by way of increasing remuneration for the teacher’s work. Until the second half of 2008, the teachers’ salary coincided with the average wages for employees in the public sector, but in recent years attempts have been made to keep it higher despite the economic crisis (see Figure 1)

Figure 1. **Teachers and public sector employees average monthly gross salary on a quarterly basis, LTL**



Source: Statistics Lithuania

In addition, to encourage more able and motivated young people to choose the teaching profession, in 2010, a motivation test to applicants of teacher training studies was introduced and a targeted scholarship of EUR400 added. In 2011, the number of students to be enrolled in state-funded places of pedagogical specialities will be reduced by more than half (from 2500 to 1200).

Development of quality assurance systems. At the end of 2008, the Concept for Quality Assurance in Formal Education – a document outlining the overall quality assurance principles of education in Lithuania – was approved. It is used to coordinate all follow-up work for the development of the quality assurance system and eliminate various historically established inconsistencies of different quality assurance measures.

In 2010, the conception of overall supervision within education was changed by shifting the focus from monitoring of how laws, regulations and standards were complied with to a deeper analysis of the situation and provision of counselling services and other assistance to people involved in education based on the findings of the analysis conducted. In the Ministry of Education and Science, the Education Supervision Department was transformed into the Education Organisation Department and the former Regional Services for the State Supervision of Education into the Education Quality Assurance and Regional Policy Department the purpose of which is to coordinate the educational quality assurance activities in municipalities.

General education. In 2008–2010, the national ESF project named ‘Development and deployment of school self-evaluation instruments’ was carried out in order to improve the evidence-based management of schools and strengthen them as learning organisations. The project is designed to develop the practice of school self-evaluation based on the national list of self-evaluation indicators and the relating methodology. It is aimed at creating a set of standardised self-assessment tools (questionnaires), which schools could choose according to their needs and complete them getting data sheets online. In parallel, the understanding of such

concepts as good training, a good lesson and a good school is being deepened. The project is to be continued.

Vocational education and training. In 2005–2008, the Concept of VET Quality Assurance System in Lithuania was developed, applicable both to initial and continuing (including non-formal education) VET. The Concept was developed on the basis of the study of quality assurance experiences in VET in Lithuania and other countries, and considering the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) for VET in Europe. The further steps of VET quality assurance system development cover introduction of internal VET quality assurance tools in VET institutions and external assessment of VET quality.

Higher education. Improvement of higher education quality assurance systems is promoted through their inclusion in the list of objects for external evaluation carried out by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. In addition, higher schools can receive targeted support for the development and implementation of quality management systems (for system creation, personnel training, system testing and its further improvement) and deployment of best practices and initiatives for the involvement of socio-economic partners in the process of quality assurance. These activities called ‘implementation and improvement of internal quality assurance mechanisms’ are supported under the National Programme of Studies (Official Gazette, 2008, No. 7-260).

Making evidence-based policy and practice work. The work of the Ministry of Education and Science is based on data provided by the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Originally, the system provided data about general education schools, teachers and students and later information about vocational schools was also integrated in it. Currently, with the need for monitoring of studies becoming more prominent, the process of creating a new EMIS sub-system – Higher Education Management Information System – is underway. This is done through the implementation of the ESF project ‘Improvement of management in higher education through the development of the Students’ Register’ and the project ‘Development and implementation of the model for monitoring higher education and research’. Experts brought together by these projects will establish a set of relevant indicators for monitoring higher education and research. By way of expanding the possibilities for the use of EMIS, the ESF project ‘Development of regional systems of education management and improvement of education policy analysts’ professional competence’ has been carried out since 2009. The project is aimed at creating an information system, designed for the needs of education management in municipal administrations. It consists of a general public list of basic comparable indicators, the same for all municipalities, and a unique part of the local policy monitoring created separately by every single municipality. The creation of the system is combined with the development of local specialists’ professional competence to carry out policy analysis.

Since 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science, in conjunction with other ministries, has been involved in the government project ‘Improvement of performance-oriented management’ funded by the European Social Fund. The project aims to strengthen the efficiency of activities performed by the government and its subordinate institutions and also improve the monitoring and accountability of their performance, analysis of institutional functions, evaluation of budget programmes and the system for assessing the impact of their decisions.

Development of national qualifications systems and their integration with the European Qualifications Framework. The concept of the National Qualifications Framework was drafted in 2005–2008. It is based on the level of achievements in the Lithuanian vocational education and training and higher education (approved in 2001 and 1991, respectively) and the European Qualifications Framework. In 2010, the Qualifications and Vocational Training Development Centre was approved as the National Coordinator. In 2010, the National Qualifications Framework was approved by the Government. It includes eight levels of qualifications. In the

same year, the National Qualifications Framework started to be linked with the European Qualifications Framework. In 2011, Lithuania will present a draft report (see Question 5 for further details).

Knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) performance assurance. To create knowledge triangle, Lithuania uses the following measures:

- Creation of integrated research, studies and business centres (valleys): 14 valley projects (with the cost of LTL 828.6 million) are being carried out (3 projects were launched in 2009 and further 11 projects in 2010). Laboratories that have been newly established or upgraded while implementing the projects of integrated research, studies and business centres (valleys) will operate on an open access basis. As a result, the R&D facilities will be available not only to Lithuanian and foreign students and researchers but also to research-intensive businesses or traditional industries.
- National integrated programmes for the development of knowledge-intensive sectors. Twelve national integrated programmes cover issues such as development and upgrading of study programmes in knowledge-intensive sectors, development of the higher education and research infrastructure and also R&D activities implemented by project applicants in co-operation with businesses. In 2010, in line with the measure ‘Strengthening of the overall higher education and research infrastructure’, 10 projects of national integrated programmes designed for the development and renewal of the public, technological and information R&D infrastructure in research-intensive sub-sectors were launched at the total cost of LTL 75.72 million and 12 projects, at the total cost of LTL 42.139 million, were launched in line with the measure ‘Development of study programmes in national integrated programmes’.
- At the same time, through the complex implementation of the Career Development Programme for Researchers, Lithuania promotes the development of careers for researchers, from school learners to internationally famous scientists.
- In 2010, the Lithuanian Government approved the National Innovation Strategy which aims to promote the integration of the knowledge triangle participants’ activities. The Lithuanian Innovation Strategy is implemented via the use of numerous integrated measures covering various economic sectors, including research and development, innovation, energy, transport, etc., which seek to develop innovative solutions.

PROPOSALS FOR THE PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD

QUESTION 9

Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009–11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?

9.1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:

High priority

9.2. Improving quality and efficiency of education and training:

High priority

9.3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:

Medium priority

9.4. Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:

High priority

9.5. Other comments:

All priority areas are of high importance to Lithuania.