

LITHUANIA:

National Report on the Bologna Process

Introduction: Development of Higher education system in Lithuania

Lithuania started higher education reform in 1990. Some higher education institutions were reorganised into universities, some into academies. Three-level education system was introduced. New universities were founded in big cities of Lithuania: Klaipėda and Šiauliai.

The system of higher education and research is based on the Law on Research and Higher Education passed on February 12, 1991 and the Law on Higher Education of March 21, 2000. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania the principles of autonomy, academic freedom and integration of research and higher education are enforced.

Provisions of these Laws and the Government resolutions, the initiative of higher education institutions have contributed to favourable principal changes in the system of higher education in Lithuania. As a result, the following changes took place:

- The three level system of higher education was introduced.
- An advanced system of credits for measuring the amount of study and promoting student exchange was introduced.
- A ten-point grading scale assessment system was introduced.
- An external assessment system for the quality of studies was introduced.
- The content of education has been in principle updated - the system has become more flexible, students are offered more choice, more time is provided for the students' individual work.

In 1995 the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (LCQAHE) was established. The Centre's task is to organise the expert assessment of research and pedagogical activity at research and higher education institutions, assess the qualifications related to higher education and provide information on the recognition of these qualifications. The Centre have created a system of the quality assessment of higher education in Lithuania - now they are able to conduct the assessment of undergraduate and second level studies. New programmes are included into the Register of Study Programmes only after they have been recommend by experts of the Centre.

In order to correlate the system of secondary school maturity examinations with the admission procedures at institutions of higher education, in 1996 the National Examination Centre was established at the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. Its main activities are to organise and conduct state and school maturity examinations at Lithuanian lower secondary and secondary schools, analyse the results and conduct diagnostic investigation of the pupils' knowledge and skills.

In 1999 the first 2 private (non-state) institutions of higher education were established in Lithuania.

Until the year 2000, the Law on Research and Higher Education provided for one level system of higher education. Irrespective of the name of the institution, any institution of research and study, which was involved in training specialists with a university education and scientists, conducting scientific research or involved in any other creative work, was defined as an institution of higher education. The new version of the Law on Higher Education introduced a two-level system of higher education and thus provided for two types of higher education institutions – universities and colleges.

Lithuania has created a basis for recognition of professional qualifications. Legislation has determined the necessity for competent institutions in the corresponding fields to regulate the procedures for recognising professional qualifications. Such legal regulations are specified for State regulated professions. Lithuania harmonised its legal acts with the corresponding directives of EU.

The Bologna Declaration - Implementation in Lithuania

Generally the Bologna Declaration is in line with the developments in the area of higher education in Lithuania over the last decade and has therefore not led to any major changes or reforms in the Lithuanian higher education policy or in the organisation and structure of the system. There are some targets of Bologna Declaration in which areas Lithuania strengthens activities last time – quality assurance, European co-operation and integration and social dimension in Lithuanian higher education system.

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees based on two main cycles

Higher education institutions have two types of studies:

- Consecutive studies
- Non-consecutive studies.

Consecutive studies are carried out following the study programmes included into the Registry of Studies and Programmes. An individual, upon completing the study programme of consecutive studies, is awarded a qualification (academic) degree and/or acquires a professional qualification.

An individual, upon completing consecutive studies, receives an academic certificate. An individual enrolled in non-consecutive studies and having collected a sufficient number of credits within a study programme, can also be considered as having completed higher education and/or awarded a qualification.

Consecutive studies corresponding to the higher education institution can be of two types:

- University, when an individual is given an opportunity to acquire higher education based on theoretical background and scientific investigation and a qualification (academic) degree as well as a research degree (after defending a thesis).
- Non-university (college) – one level (undergraduate) professional studies intended for the preparation for professional activity. They provide opportunities to acquire professional

qualifications on the basis of applied scientific investigation or/and applied research activities.

University studies are organised in three levels:

- First level (undergraduate Bachelor programmes).
- Second level (Master's, specialised professional programmes).
- Third level (residency programmes, doctoral studies and post-graduate art studies).

A study level is a classificatory parameter of study programmes defined by the complexity level of the programme, the role of the awarded qualification in the national framework of qualifications and other features.

The first level of studies is aimed at expanding one's general education, providing knowledge and skills which would allow to start professional activity, teaching an individual to creatively use the accumulated knowledge and skills.

The second level of studies is aimed at preparing students for their individual career in science or arts a career requiring scientific knowledge and skills.

Integrated studies are offered only in case when splitting the studies into two levels does not make any sense.

There are three modes of consecutive studies: daytime, evening and extra-mural. A concrete mode of a study trend, the subjects to be taught and their proportions are defined in the regulations of this particular study field.

Higher education, obtained upon completing the same level but different modes of studies, is of the same value.

Higher education is acquired when pursuing studies at higher education institutions following the programmes of undergraduate (at universities and colleges) or integrated (at universities) studies. Applicants are admitted to higher education institutions on a competitive basis and must have not lower than general secondary education.

Undergraduate studies are consecutive university or non-university studies. Undergraduate university studies last for four years. Upon completing a Bachelor's programme in university, a Bachelor's degree and/or professional qualifications are awarded. Non-university studies last for not less than three years. Upon completing them, professional qualifications are awarded.

Upon completing a Bachelor's programme, a specialised professional or Master's programme can be undertaken. Education at this level lasts from one and a half to two years. Upon completing a Master's programme, a Master's Degree is awarded.

Specialised professional studies last from one to two years. Upon completing them, professional qualifications are awarded.

Integrated studies are those that integrate first and second level of university education. Upon completing them, a Master's degree or professional qualification is awarded.

Upon completing the second level or integrated study programmes, education can be pursued at the third (highest) level – by enrolling in doctoral or post-graduate art studies. Doctoral

programmes are devoted for the preparation of scientific staff and include studies, scientific investigations and preparation of Doctor's (PhD) thesis. Studies last for three or four years. Upon completing the doctoral programme, a Doctor's (PhD) degree is awarded.

A post-graduate art programme is devoted to the preparation of persons for teaching at institutions of higher art education and specialised creative artistic activities. The post-graduate art programme lasts for two years. Upon completing the programme, the degree of an art licentiate is awarded.

Those pursuing medical education at a university continue their study in the residency. This is a specific second level of university education intended for preparing individuals for the work of physicians and medical practitioners. Education lasts from three to seven years.

Establishment of a system of credits - as in the ECTS system

Lithuania uses its own national credit system. The national credit in Lithuania is based on student workload (contact hours, independent study, exercises, research and/or other assignments) and refers to notional 40 work hours by a student per week. 1 Lithuanian credit equals to one study week. One national credit is equal to 1,5 ECTS credit.

The Law on Higher Education adopted in March 2000 states that the average amount of one academic year full-time studies corresponds to 40 credits. It does not indicate minimum or maximum study workload.

At the moment, for a Bachelor's programme or equivalent level the regular duration is 4 years of study, which amount to 160 national (240 ECTS) credits. However, the Law on Higher Education allows the first cycle programmes to last from 3,5 years up to 4,5 years, from 140 national (210 ECTS) to 180 national (270 ECTS) credits respectively.

The regular duration for a full-time Master's programme varies from 1,5 years (60 national (90 ECTS) credits) to 2 years (80 national (120 ECTS) credits).

Universities in Lithuania use ECTS credits in student exchange.

Implementation of the Diploma Supplement

Working group was formed for the preparation of the legislation for the Diploma Supplement. This task force group is at the conclusion of the task now, so expected that higher education institutions will issue Diploma Supplement from 2004.

Lithuania has joined three international conventions covering the field of the recognition of academic qualifications:

- UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees Concerning Higher Education to the European Region, 1979 (This Convention came into effect in Lithuania in 1997).

- European Council Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities, No. 15, 1953 (Came into effect in Lithuania in 1997).
- Council of Europe / UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualification Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon, 1997 (Came into effect in Lithuania in 1999).

Lithuania joining to the above Conventions committed itself to observe the principles and regulations for recognition of higher education qualifications as regulated by the Conventions.

Promotion of mobility

Due to the expansion of international collaboration, the following forms of mobility of individuals, relevant to academic and professional qualifications, are distinguished:

- students travelling abroad for consecutive studies;
- students travelling abroad for periods of study at the institutions of higher education of other countries;
- Lithuanian citizens travelling abroad and foreign citizens to Lithuania for consecutive studies;
- Students starting their studies in one country and then go to another country to complete them;
- Teachers and scientists performing research or working at institutions of research or studies of other countries;
- People going to foreign countries for permanent residence (emigration).

Favourable conditions for free movement of people are provided by the state's joining the international conventions, signing declarations, other international treaties and agreements, instigation of international funds, participation in the EU and other international programmes.

Lithuanian higher education institutions actively participate in the international collaboration: take part in various international programmes, sign agreements with foreign institutions of higher education, based on which the mechanism of international exchange of students, scientists and teachers operates. The exchange programmes were also induced by a successful implementation of such international programmes as – TEMPUS, PHARE, COPERNIKUS, FRAMEWORK, and ACE.

The contacts with foreign countries have expanded considerably with Lithuania joining LEONARDO DA VINCI and SOCRATES programmes, and especially ERASMUS - the branch of SOCRATES that receives more than a half of the budget of the programme.

ERASMUS sub-programme is the most popular in Lithuania. The main targets of this programme are following : to foster international co-operation between higher education institutions, to promote academic staff exchange with the aim to improve the quality of studies, to encourage student mobility enable them to spend a part of their studies in other countries and to promote the learning of languages. Lithuanian higher education institutions have been involved in the SOCRATES programme since 1999/2000. Initially, 12 universities took part in the programme. Since 2000/2001 all higher education institutions have become involved in the SOCRATES.

The number of Lithuanian students going abroad for the periods of study is increasing each year. Although the process is slower, the number of foreigners coming to study to Lithuania also grows.

Both Lithuanians and foreign citizens may enter both state-financed and non-state-financed places. The state-financed places are open for foreigners who have a permanent residence permit or are citizens of the states do not charge Lithuanian citizens studying there. Currently, the countries the citizens of which have the right to enter the state-financed places are Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Germany. The quotas for foreigners to be accepted into state-financed places determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Foreign students admitted to state-financed places are entitled to receive scholarships under the same conditions as the Lithuanian citizens.

Foreign citizens who come to Lithuania under international treaties or agreements are admitted to Lithuanian higher education institutions under the conditions stipulated in the respective treaties or agreements.

All other foreign citizens admitted to study at Lithuanian higher education institutions have to pay a fee established by the higher education institution concerned. The fee depends on the programme chosen and the degree sought.

Foreign citizens willing to study at Lithuanian higher education institutions are offered to take up courses of the Lithuanian language before starting on their major. During the courses, the students acquire the basic knowledge of the Lithuanian language, history of the Lithuanian literature and learn the key facts about the Republic of Lithuania. Language courses are organised in three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. The knowledge acquired, depending on the level chosen, opens the doors to study the respective study programmes at all Lithuanian higher education institutions.

Although the main language of instruction in Lithuanian universities is Lithuanian, an increasing number of programmes are being offered in English and other foreign languages.

Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

The quality of higher education is assured by evaluating and comparing the scientific and educational activities of higher education institutions and through public information.

The system of quality assurance has been developed with regard to the general trends of the European practice. The development has taken the following stages:

- in 1996, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education was established, its regulations and the Regulations for the Assessment of Research and Higher Education Institutions approved;
- in 1996, all study programmes of higher education institutions were registered, the Register of Study Programmes established and the order for the registration of study programmes approved;
- in 1997, evaluation of newly introduced study programmes was started on a regular basis;
- in 1997, expert external assessment of study programmes was started.

Quality assurance is regulated by the following recently adopted legal acts:

- The General Classification of Study Areas and Fields and the List of Qualifications Granted;
- General Requirements for Higher Education Study Programmes;
- Typical Structure of the Study Field Regulation;
- Descriptions of the Modes of Studies;
- Rules for Assessment of Scientific and Higher Education Institutions (amended version);
- Order of Accreditation of the Assessed Higher Education Study Programmes.

The efficiency and level of the scientific and education activities of higher education institutions is assessed by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, which also provides recommendations for improvement.

The Centre:

- Co-ordinates the regular self-assessment of higher education institutions (by assessing their own performance, the institutions set goals and objectives, perceive their problems and seek ways to solve them);
- Organises expert external assessment of this activity (study programmes are evaluated by embracing all academic fields and an effort is made to establish whether their quality corresponds to the general requirements of the higher education programmes and whether the academic degrees and professional qualifications acquired are recognisable internationally and provide a possibility to study at foreign higher education institutions);
- Organises the assessment of new study programmes.

In 1999 regular education programme assessment by study field was started.

In 2001 the practice of assessing study programmes by inviting foreign experts was introduced.

The commission established in spring 2001 under the order of the Minister of Education and Science has evaluated the level of scientific activity of the faculties of Lithuanian universities whether is sufficient to offer Master's degree studies.

The results of the assessment enable a higher education institution to improve its study programmes and compare them with similar programmes in other institutions. Publications on the issues of higher education and quality of studies are aimed to inform the public about the use of state funds in organising preparation of professional specialists.

Besides Centre's for Quality Assessment in Higher Education main function of organising expert assessment of research and pedagogical activity at research and higher education institutions, it has also been commissioned to execute the functions of the Lithuanian National Academic Recognition and Mobility Centre (Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC):

- to assess the higher education qualifications acquired abroad and periods of study;
- to provide information, consultations and recommendations on the issues of education acquired abroad;
- to exchange an information with ENIC/NARIC and institutions be in charge of diploma recognition world-wide.

Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

There have been no specific measures undertaken to define “the European dimension” in respect to university education in Lithuania. However, the close and wide-ranging co-operation and contacts with other European institutions and international organisations have both directly and indirectly had an effect both on the structure and content of higher education. Higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to participate in European and other international education and research programmes.

The main language of instruction at all higher education institutions is Lithuanian. However, as not all literature required for the studies is available in Lithuanian, it is essential to have good knowledge of at least one foreign language (English, German, French or Russian). Students and staff are encouraged to improve their language learning skills.

Higher education institutions also offer courses read by foreign lecturers in English or other language agreed upon by the parties. Courses for the international students coming for short periods of study can also be conducted in English, German, French and Russian.

Foreign citizens coming under international treaties and agreements also are given lectures in foreign languages. As optional such courses also can be chosen by the students in consecutive studies.

Social dimension

The State supports and promotes research and higher education, ensures social and professional guarantees of scientists and educators, the aid for students. State Constitution guarantees free of charge education for “good “ students. Approximately 50 percent of daytime students get state grants and are exempt from tuition fees. The system of promotion and support for students has been introduced. Students can take loans for their needs from a special Fund. Loans are provided for living costs, for paying tuition fees and for studies abroad organized within the framework of international treaties and agreements. All students paying tuition fees have a possibility to get loans sufficient to cover tuition fees. Depending on the type of the loan it has to be repaid either during the term treble longer than the study period for which the loan was received or within 15 years. Repayment is started from the second year after graduation. The Government is constantly increasing allocations for student loan programme. The Fund for loans has increased from 2,47 million in 1999 to 17,78 Lt in 2003.

Two types of scholarships are available – scholarships for students with good study results and scholarships for welfare recipient students. All doctoral students receive bigger scholarships.

Students actively participate in the management of the higher education institution in which they study

Student representatives are members of the Senate and the Executive Board of the higher education institution. Each university has an organization of student representatives. Scholarships for students are allotted with respect to the opinion to this organisation. Besides,

each university has a Commission for Contentions dissolving various disagreements between students and administration of the university.

Other support including student accommodation, accessibility for disabled students and aid for welfare recipient students is available.

Life Long Learning

Policy and legislative framework

Significance of Lifelong Learning was understood in the very beginning of education reform that started in 1990. This can be illustrated by the following examples from different documents:

Lithuanian Education Conception (1992) when establishing the objectives for education of youth places the emphasis on the principle of Lifelong Learning.

The Law on Non-formal Adult Education (1998) covers a broad sector of adult education, which includes continuous professional education and training covering different areas of personal development and leading to a non-governmentally approved certificate. Recognition of such certificate, however, is within the discretion of employers or professional bodies.

White Paper on Vocational Education and Training (1999) defines that "*The objective of vocational education and training is to foster a person who is conscious, independent, active, mature vis-à-vis the needs of the nation and state, and engaged in Lifelong Learning*";

White Paper on Higher Education (1999) emphasises promotion of idea of Lifelong Learning in the society and provision of Lifelong Learning opportunities among other responsibilities of higher education establishments.

Also LLL has very important part in these documents:

The Programme for Increasing Employment (2001-2004)

National Development Plan 2002-2004.

Joint Assessment of Employment Policy Priorities (JAP).

Country Monograph.

Drafts of two important documents are under discussion at present: *the Law on Education* and *Guidelines for Education for the period 2003-2012.*

Both of the above documents integrate the concept of LLL. Other education strategic documents are also based on the ideas of Lifelong Learning on education such as Strategy for Introducing Information and Communication Technologies into Education (2002), White Paper on Science and Technologies (2001), Higher Education system development Plan for 2002 –2006.

Management/Organizations involved

In Lithuania the following institutions are responsible for the management and supervision of education:

- Ministry of Education and Science (MES) which develops, implements and *supervises* national education policy in pre-school, children and youth, special education, vocational education and training, adult education and higher education sectors;
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL) is responsible for organisation and implementation of continuing vocational training lies with the Labour Market Training

Authority under the MSSL. LMTA implements labour market training policy and organise provision of information and counselling services related to vocational training. ;

- There are also other ministries and departments that are responsible for a considerable part of adult vocational training: Ministries of Agriculture and Internal Affairs. Big enterprises have their own training centres.

Co-ordination in relation to non-formal adult education is based on the Law on Non-formal Adult Education. The main co-ordinating body is the National Board of Non-formal Adult Education established by the Law on Non-formal Adult Education The Minister of Education and Science nominates members to the Board chosen from the experts in adult education mainly employed by governmental institutions, and approves the statute of the Board. The Ministry together with the Board establishes priorities, presents proposals for state financing as well as the development of the system.

Social partners and professional bodies according to the Law on Vocational Education and Training have broad participatory and advisory rights in initial and labour market vocational training.

Labour market training is fully funded from the Employment Fund (responsible body – the Ministry of Social Security and Labour). Higher education including distance (part-time) studies for adults is partly financed from the state budget, partly by the students who pay tuition fees. Some programmes of non-formal adult education are financed from the state and municipal budgets.

The private sector is involved in the funding of adult education via input into the Employment Fund, funding of private education institutions, supporting vocational and professional continuous education and training of employees.

From the year 2002 Ministry of Education and Science announces the competition for non-formal adult education projects and programmes financed from the state budget. Different organisations have a right to participate in that competition.

The main principles of the organisation of time and venue for studies are as follows: evening classes, modular teaching, distance (correspondence) education with several short face-to-face sessions. Distance education could be provided in work places, distance learning classes, adult education centres, universities, colleges, etc.

There are limited possibilities for adults who have not acquired higher education earlier to participate in full time continuing education or retraining studies in universities. There is no unified system for credit transfer of either between the same or different level institutions.