

COUNTRY SYSTEM MAPPING

Country Report: Lithuania

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) is an independent and self-governing organisation. The Agency is co-funded by the ministries of education in its member countries and by the European Commission via an operating grant within the European Union (EU) education programme.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

The views expressed by any individual in this document do not necessarily represent the official views of the Agency, its member countries or the European Commission.

© European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2023

This publication is an open-access resource. This means you are free to access, use and disseminate it with appropriate credit to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Please refer to the Agency's Open Access Policy for more information: www.european-agency.org/open-access-policy.

You may cite this publication as follows: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2023. *Country System Mapping Country Report: Lithuania*. Odense, Denmark

The information in this document was current in May 2023.

This country report has been drafted by Ruta Svarinskaite for the Agency in co-operation with the Lithuania Team:

Representative Board member: Kristina Valantiniene

National Co-ordinator: Lina Palačionienė

Country Analyst: Svajonė Mikėnė



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

You may not modify or translate this publication without the Agency's approval.

With a view to greater accessibility, this report is available in accessible electronic format on the Agency's website: www.european-agency.org

Secretariat

Østre Stationsvej 33

DK-5000 Odense C Denmark

Tel.: +45 64 41 00 20

secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office

Rue Montoyer 21

BE-1000 Brussels Belgium

Tel.: +32 2 213 62 80

brussels.office@european-agency.org



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM	10
SECTION 2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM	18
SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	34
SECTION 4. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE	56
SECTION 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY	70
SECTION 6. STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION, CO-OPERATION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	81



INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Country System Mapping (CSM) activity is to identify, map and analyse the key features that impact the effective implementation of inclusive education policy in practice in all Agency member countries' education systems. In a departure from previous thematic activities undertaken by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency), CSM considers the **whole** education system from the perspective of implementing policy for inclusive education in practice. However, within this system-wide view, there is a focus on the specific priorities Representative Board members (RBs) have already identified in relation to monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working and quality assurance.

The main output from the CSM work is a systematic mapping of information on each country's education system.

Information from the individual CSM Country Reports has been analysed in two ways:

- **Thematic Analysis** to highlight issues (challenges and opportunities) emerging from the reports to use as the starting point for the Agency's Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA).

Challenges for inclusion are defined as things the country needs to work on to reach an inclusive education system. Strengths for inclusion are things that encourage and reinforce inclusive practice in the country and could potentially be shown as an example to other countries.

- **Mapping** to inform TCCA groupings, based on the system structures and processes countries have (or do not have) in common.

The agreed goal for the mapping element of the CSM analysis work was to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate which country systems are structured and/or working in different – or similar – ways.

The information from the CSM work will be used within the remainder of the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021–2027](#) (MAWP). As of autumn 2024, country cluster activities will be organised which are closely aligned to individual country approaches to key issues for inclusive education, as well as system structures and processes countries have in common.



Work within a shared vision for inclusive education systems

All Agency work is aligned with the [position on inclusive education systems](#). This agreed position states that the ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that:

All learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers ([European Agency, 2022, p. 1](#))¹.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners. However, all aspects of Agency work clearly recognise that some groups of learners face obstacles and barriers that mean they should be considered **learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education in mainstream schools in their local community, alongside their friends and peers**.

UNESCO identifies the possible obstacles and barriers to education learners may face as arising from:

... gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes ([UNESCO, 2020, p. 4](#))².

Many learners may face a combination of these factors and the intersectional (inter-connected) nature of learners' needs must be acknowledged. Every learner has their own unique experiences of discrimination and/or barriers to learning. Everything and anything that can marginalise learners and increase their chances of exclusion from mainstream inclusive education must be understood and recognised.

All Agency member countries are committed to working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems. They do so in different ways, depending on their past and current contexts and histories. Inclusive education systems are a vital component within the wider aspiration of more socially inclusive societies that all countries align themselves with, both ethically and politically. However, all Agency work clearly recognises that countries have differences in their ways of thinking about, identifying and making provision for different groups of learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

All countries have undergone key conceptual changes in their thinking and policy priorities for developments as they move towards inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality education for all learners. Across countries, the first shift was made from the concept of special educational needs to special needs education. This shift represented a focus away from the learner (identified as having special educational needs) towards a focus on the provision they receive (special needs education for learners who experience difficulties at school). The term 'special needs education' has also widened the focus

¹ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022. *Agency Position on Inclusive Education Systems*. Odense, Denmark

² UNESCO, 2020. *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: all means all*. Paris: UNESCO



beyond learners with disabilities to include learners who appeared to be failing in school for a wide variety of reasons.

It is worth emphasising here that there have never been agreed definitions of the concepts of special educational needs or special needs education that can be consistently used across countries. The groups of learners considered as having special educational needs which require additional provision largely differ across countries.

The most recent shifts emphasise a move away from a concern with types of special needs or the categories a learner may or may not fall into, towards thinking of inclusion and inclusive education as an approach for all learners. They emphasise the barriers experienced by learners and focus overall on learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities for different reasons.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in its member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners, while recognising the need to specifically address learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

Overview of the Country System Mapping

The information collected in the CSM activity aims to provide evidence of and reflection on **where countries currently are** in their inclusive thinking, policy and provision for all learners, but in particular for those learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

CSM work focuses on the **whole** education system and how certain structures, mechanisms and processes may impact on the implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice. It aims to get insights into how the needs of all learners – including individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education – are being considered. Many questions refer to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education. Countries have opportunities to clarify what 'learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education' means for them and their systems.

However, it is acknowledged that it may not be possible for countries to provide information covering all learners and all learner groups.

The questions specifically focus on four priorities RBs have identified for wider future Agency work in relation to:

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Cross-sector working
- Quality assurance
- Effective policy implementation.

There are six main sections:

Section 1. Background to the inclusive education system

Section 2. Overview of the education system

Section 3. Legislative and policy framework



Section 4. System governance

Section 5. Quality assurance and accountability

Section 6. Stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication

In each of these sections, relevant information was collected covering International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 02 (pre-primary education) to 3 (upper-secondary education).

Each section has two subsections which require different types of country information, as outlined below.

All questions were rephrased into statements for the purpose of this report.

System description

Sections 1 to 6 include specific questions that aim to provide a factual description of key aspects of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in the country. The system information aims to accurately describe the relevant policy frameworks in countries.

Different types of questions are used to collect information that describes important system features – structures, mechanisms and processes – relating to governance, monitoring, quality assurance and collaboration. The descriptive information includes sources of original material and, where possible, is supported with quotes and citations from relevant policy documents and published work.

The descriptive information will be analysed to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate how countries are structured and/or working. This mapping will be used to inform country cluster groupings based on system structures and processes that countries have in common.

The descriptive information will also be used to prepare thematic cluster activities with Agency member countries. These activities will elaborate and collect even more detailed country information for the different priority areas from 2023 onwards.

Evaluative commentary

An important element of the questions is the evaluative, qualified and evidenced-based reflection on the factual information provided in sections 1 to 6.

The evaluative commentaries aim to provide a qualified reflection on the implementation of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. They provide observations on and interpretations of the system factors that impact positively or negatively on inclusive education.

The evaluative commentaries reflect on **where and why the practice of inclusive education differs from or actively supports the stated policy intentions and goals** in the system description.



For the evaluative commentaries linked to each section, the following general questions are posed:

- What have been the perceived main challenges (barriers and hindrances) for inclusive education? Why do they exist and what are the consequences?
- What have been the perceived opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusive education? What areas for development are identified and how can they be successfully implemented?

In addition, specific topic-related questions are also suggested.

The analysis of the evaluative commentary information will take a grounded approach. It will aim to identify issues that emerge as barriers to or supporting factors for meeting the needs of all learners in inclusive systems.

This analysis will be used to inform future Agency activities with member countries regarding country-specific and common system challenges and opportunities.



SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides key background information in relation to inclusive education in the country.

1.1 Overview of the historical development of inclusive education

Source: [Country information for Lithuania](#)

Source: [Agreement on National Education Policy \(2021–2030\)](#)

Source: [Amendments of the Law on Education](#)

Source: [Preparation for inclusion in 2021–2024 Action Plan](#)

Source: [Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania](#)

Source: [Education Development Programme of the National Progress Plan 2021–2030](#)

Since the restoration of its independence, during the last three decades, Lithuania has implemented substantial reforms towards inclusive educational practices on both legislative and also practical levels.

The first basis in legislation for inclusive education of children with special educational needs is the *Act of Special Educational Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Educational Institutions (1993)*. This document started to legitimise the inclusive education of learners with special educational needs in mainstream institutions.

The main ideas of inclusive education and the concept of ‘inclusion’ are stated in different national-level documents, including the *Law on Education (2011)*; the *National Education Strategy 2013–2022*; *Profile of the Competence of the Teaching Profession (2014)*; the ‘*Good School Concept*’ (2015); *Teacher Training Standards (2018)*.

Procedure for Organisation of Learners with Special Educational Needs (2011). The municipality ensures the availability and quality of education for each learner with special educational needs living in the municipality’s territory.

[Procedure for Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Assignment of their Special Education \(2011, and its amendment in 2013\)](#) describes the procedure for determining groups of learners with special educational needs and allocating their special educational needs into levels. It regulates the identification of disabilities, disorders and learning difficulties that constitute special educational needs and the criteria for categorising them into levels.

[Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania \(2011, and its amendments\)](#). This law determines the accessibility of education for learners with special needs. This is ensured by adapting the school’s environment, by providing psychological, special pedagogical, special and social-pedagogical assistance, and by supplying schools with technical aids and special teaching aids.



[National Education Strategy 2013–2022](#) aimed to ‘develop and strengthen non-formal education for children and young people to ensure that pupils, students and young people have the best opportunities to fulfil their true potential’. The goal is to include learners with special educational needs in mainstream education to the maximum possible extent.

‘*Good School Concept*’ (2015) discusses the trend from education for all to education for everyone, i.e. personalised education(s) and training(s), recognising that people's experiences, needs and aspirations are different and learning is taking place in different ways and paces.

In the *Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2020)* it is emphasised that together with all political forces, teachers, parents, students and society at large, the Government will work out and put into practice a National education agreement, the main goal of which is to ensure equal opportunities for every Lithuanian child to achieve the best education regardless of their place of residence or social background.

Agreement on National Education Policy (2021–2030). Leaders of Lithuania’s political parties signed an agreement on education policy on 1 September 2021, agreeing to test and implement inclusive education measures in at least five municipalities and schools by the end of 2023. This will allow for a consistent expanding of the network of institutions fostering inclusive education (source: [Agreement on National Education Policy \(2021–2030\)](#)).

Upon adoption of the amendments of the *Law on Education* (Law Amending Articles 5, 14, 21, 29, 30, 34 and 36 of Law No I-1489 on Education and Supplementing it with Article 45-1, 30/06/2020 No XIII3268), all general education schools will have to accept all pupils without any exceptions. Until 1 September 2024 a school, if it is unable for objective reasons to guarantee a learner in compulsory education programmes the psychological, special pedagogical, special or social pedagogical assistance, has to propose to a learner to study in another school (article 29 of the Law on Education). It meant that schools had the right to refuse to admit a learner, claiming that the school was not adjusted to the learner’s needs. The amendments of the *Law on Education* abolish this discriminatory provision and from 1 September 2024, the schools must ensure the access to education for a student with special educational needs by providing psychological, special pedagogical, special, social pedagogical assistance, social, health care and other services, providing educational technical support tools at school, special teaching tools, adapting the educational environment (physical, informational) and by other ways, established by the Law (entry into force on 01/09/2024; source: [Amendments of the Law on Education](#)).

Preparation for inclusion in 2021–2024 Action Plan aims to remove physical, informational, and social barriers and ensure quality education for every child while learning together with their peers in the nearest educational institution, providing the necessary assistance that meets their educational needs. The action plan envisages a whole complex of measures necessary for inclusive education – from adaptation of school infrastructure and provision of necessary teaching tools to the establishment of advisory assistance and additional educational assistance positions in schools and strengthening the training of qualified specialists (source: [Preparation for inclusion in 2021–2024 Action Plan](#)).



[Education Development Programme of the National Progress Plan 2021–2030](#) (2021) indicates the main problems in education and describes their reasons, such as unequal opportunities to start school, insufficient use of educational technologies and digital innovations to increase the efficiency of the education system and the quality of learning outcomes, as well as insufficiently developed educational support in schools, etc.

1.2 Legislation and policy definitions linked to key concepts within inclusive education systems

Inclusive education

Source: Legislative Definitions country report

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Definition: ‘Inclusion – the education system enables everyone to be educated, develop their powers and abilities, receive the help they need, experience success in learning, in social, cultural and/or other activities, and not be discriminated against because of the diversity of educational needs and/or educational assistance needs’.

The *Law on Education XIII-3268 Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymo Nr. I-1489 5, 14, 21, 29, 30, 34 ir 36 straipsnių pakeitim...* ([lrs.lt](#))

Entry into force and implementation of the law

1. With the exception of Articles 1 and 8 and paragraph 3 of this Article, this Law shall enter into force on 1 September 2024.

Special needs education

Source: [EASIE](#)

Source: ([GEM country report](#), p. 28)

Definition: Special educational needs – need for assistance and services in the course of the educational process, arising from a person’s exceptional capabilities, congenital or acquired disorders, adverse environmental factors.’

The Article 2 of the [Law on Education](#)

Learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: ([GEM country report](#), p. 28)

Order of the Minister of Social protection and work of 20 December 2019 No. A2-791 ‘[On the approval of the social inclusion action plan 2020–2023](#)’

Article 33 of the *Law on Education* describes the accessibility of education to socially excluded persons, by the same providing a definition of who can be socially excluded:

1. The accessibility of education to socially excluded children from poor families, children of refugees, children not attending school, unemployed persons, persons who have returned from imprisonment, persons undergoing treatment for alcohol and drug addiction as well as persons failing to adapt to society shall be ensured by providing them with social services and educational assistance.



2. The Government and municipalities shall implement targeted social and education programmes directly or through schools. Such programmes may be developed and implemented by non-governmental organisations as well as other legal and natural persons.

3. State and municipal institutions and agencies, on the basis of the data of the registers recording residents as well as of other state and departmental registers, shall determine the number of children not attending school and their educational needs and shall, together with schools, implement target programmes for the inclusion of these children in education activity.

Other(s)

Source: ([GEM country report](#), p.28)

Order of the Minister of Social protection and work of 20 December 2019 No. A2-791
[‘On the approval of the social inclusion action plan 2020–2023’](#)

‘Socially excluded persons are persons (families) who for some reason are excluded from various areas of society. Socially excluded persons can at the same time be considered as both persons at social risk and socially vulnerable persons’.

‘Persons at risk of social risk – persons (families) affected by factors and circumstances that cause or threaten their social exclusion’.

1.3 Individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education focused on in the report

Though in the definition of children with special educational needs children with exceptional capabilities are included, the replies focus on the learners with special educational needs that arise because of disabilities, learners with disorders, and learners with learning difficulties, as well as on other groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education: children from poor families and children with migrant backgrounds or national minorities, because these are the largest groups of learners who have diverse needs and abilities that must be taken into account in order to include them into the education system.

1.4 Development of thinking around learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)

Source: [OECD PISA 2018 data analysis](#)

Source: [PISA 2018 and the EU – Striving for social fairness through education](#)

Source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)

In 1994, Lithuania signed the UNESCO Salamanca Declaration of the Development of Special Needs Persons, and in 1995, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Before that there was a clear segregation of traditional schools and special



schools, but later the processes of integration started. The strategic documents of the European Union and Lithuania emphasise the inclusive education that ensures the right and development for all learners to study at their nearest educational institution in the environment, adapted to their needs and abilities.

The number of learners with special educational needs is constantly increasing and in the 2021/2022 school year it is 71,400, or 15.4 per cent of all learners studying in pre-school, pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Since ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010), Lithuania committed to ensure equal opportunities for all children to study in any educational institution with other students; however, up until now, children who need educational assistance or physical adaptation of classroom facilities were offered to study in special schools and were unable to learn with their peers who don't have special needs. In the 2020/2021 year, there were 43 special schools, where 3,685 learners with high and very high special educational needs study. Children with disabilities make up approximately 2.2 per cent of the total number of learners in general education; their number in special schools is decreasing slowly. In 2021, 89.3 per cent of all learners with special educational needs studying in pre-primary, primary and secondary education were learning in mainstream education schools' general classes; 7.6 per cent – in special schools, 3.1 per cent – in mainstream education schools' special classes (source: [Education management information system](#) and [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#), p. 120).

From the 2024 school year, every child will get the opportunity to study at their nearest educational institution. This means that children with disabilities will be able to study in mainstream pre-schools and general education schools equally with others. This means that educational institutions will have to meet the needs of all community members – for example, the place of education will have to be accessible, safe, attractive, functional, with clear visual and audio directions. However, to achieve this goal in 2024, is necessary to expand the support system in schools, admit more educational support professionals and teaching assistants to schools and allocate money to their salaries, adapt the school environment for inclusive education, and improve the qualification of all teachers and their competences so that they can work in the classroom with children with special educational needs. It can be rather difficult for schools to get ready for this in such short period of time.

Another vulnerable group is migrants. From February 2022 until 1 June 2022 55,200 refugees arrived from Ukraine, including 5,700 children under 6 and 16,000 between 6 and 17 years; 70.6 per cent of them are studying in primary and lower secondary education programmes. Therefore, this is also a challenge for the education system (source: [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)).

In 2021, the number of children learning in national minority languages (Russian, Belorussian, Polish) and also in English and French languages is 38,800 or 7.9 per cent of pre-school, pre-primary, secondary education, vocational education learners (source: [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). The analysis of PISA (2018) data (source: [OECD PISA 2018 data analysis](#)) has shown that the highest results are achieved by students who study in schools in Lithuanian and Russian as the languages of instruction. For students who studied Polish or several languages of instruction in schools, the results are lower. One factor is the area where the school is located. Various studies and analyses



show that the achievement of students in schools in rural areas may be lower on average than that of students in urban schools for various reasons, one of them being lower social, economic and cultural (SEC) environment. Differences in achievement can also be influenced by differences in the quality of education for children learning in different languages.

Participation in early childhood education tends to be lower in rural areas, and student outcomes are marked by a significant urban–rural gap. The early school leaving rate is almost four times higher in rural areas (8.2% in 2021) than in urban areas (2.2%) and the tertiary attainment rate for people aged 25–34 is much lower (43.6% versus 70.6% in 2021). A significant urban–rural gap also exists in the level of digital skills. This partly reflects broader socio-economic disparities, which are stronger in Lithuania than the EU average, and have been increasing over the past two decades. A lack of access to quality social services, including education, makes rural areas less attractive and widens the rural–urban divide (source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

During 2018–2021, the share of school children who get financial and other support at schools has been decreasing; however, the situation in the municipalities differs and in 2021 ranges from 38.6 per cent of children getting support in Pakruojis district municipality to 2 per cent in the municipalities of the largest cities (Vilnius, Klaipėda). This is one of the indicators of a difficult economic situation. Also, statistics show that the number of 0–17 year-old children living at risk of poverty is decreasing; however, in 2021 there were 17.2 per cent of children living at risk of poverty and 3.7 per cent of children living in absolute poverty conditions (source: [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). PISA, the international research performed in the OECD countries, data for 2018 year confirms that in Lithuania, like in most EU countries, SEC environment has an impact on children’s achievements. For example, socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 89 score points (source: [PISA 2018 and the EU - Striving for social fairness through education](#)).

1.5 Future education system developments that may impact positively or negatively on inclusive education

The implementation of the new amendments to the *Law on Education* which will come into force from 1 September 2024 will be a step towards inclusive education. Preparation for inclusion in the 2021–2024 Action Plan has been created, which will help to prepare for planned development of the inclusive education system. It aims to remove physical, informational, and social barriers and ensure quality education and the provision of the necessary pedagogical, psychological assistance for every child. The action plan envisages a whole complex of measures necessary for development of inclusive education: adaptation of school infrastructure, provision of necessary teaching tools to the establishment of advisory assistance and additional educational assistance positions in schools, and strengthening the training of qualified specialists. However, these are just preparatory works before actual inclusion into education. Various measures will be continued, including measures orientated into the changes of parents’ attitudes (nowadays, there are still parents of children with no special educational needs who are resistant to the idea that children with special educational needs will be taught in general



classes, because they believe that it will negatively affect the education of their children without special educational needs, and their achievements will suffer if the teachers have to devote a large part of their attention to the children with special educational needs).

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of developments towards inclusive education. It specifically considers political decisions that have impacted (positively or negatively) upon the vision for, and implementation of, inclusive education in the country. It also considers how changes in thinking around learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education have impacted upon policy and practice.

Since the restoration of its independence in 1990, Lithuania has implemented substantial reforms towards inclusive educational practices on both legislative and also practical levels. Lithuania's strategic education documents are focused on the actualisation of inclusion in the field of education and are consistent with the main international provisions of inclusive education.

The inclusion in education principle is defined in the amendment of the *Law on Education*: 'Inclusion – the education system enables everyone to be educated, develop their powers and abilities, receive the help they need, experience success in learning, in social, cultural and/or other activities, and not be discriminated because of the diversity of educational needs and/or educational assistance needs'.

Strategic and action plans for the development of inclusive education are being prepared, which include specific measures for the development of inclusion, monitoring and evaluation of processes, and other amendments to the *Law on Education* related to transformations in the provision of educational assistance are planned.

The main challenge faced is the need to prepare for ensuring inclusion in education in all pre-school and general education schools from September 2024. Efforts are needed to minimise barriers to learning for children with special educational needs. It is necessary to expand support systems in schools, admit more educational support professionals and teaching assistants to schools and allocate money to their salaries, adapt the school environment for inclusive education, and improve the qualification of all teachers and their competences so that they can work in the classroom with children with special needs. Preparation for inclusion in the 2021–2024 Action Plan has been created which envisages a complex of measures necessary for the development of inclusive education: adaptation of school infrastructure, provision of necessary teaching tools to the establishment of advisory assistance and additional educational assistance positions in schools, and strengthening the training of qualified specialists. The number of children with special educational needs who have received educational assistance grows; however, the educational system is not capable of providing assistance to all who are in need of it – in 2021, 78.4 per cent received educational assistance of all general education students who have been identified as needing assistance ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). Lithuania, ratifying in 2010 the United Nations Convention of Persons with Disabilities' rights (2006), together with other countries is obliged to ensure that, in the



implementation of disabled persons' right to education, the conditions would be properly adapted to the needs of these persons. The data for 2021 show that the physical environment of the country's general education schools and vocational training institutions is not suitable for inclusive education. Of the 957 general education schools, only 7 were fully adapted for students with movement disabilities ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). Therefore, the main challenges are related to the need to adapt the school environment for the learning of children with various special educational needs in a short period of time, to accept the necessary number of educational support specialists and teacher assistants. Another problem is society's attitudes. [Representative survey](#) carried out by order of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsmen in 2022, shows that less than half (43%) of Lithuanian residents agree with the statement that children with disabilities and special educational needs should study together with everyone in general classes; 25% have no opinion, and almost one third (31%) of the respondents would not agree that their own child(ren) should receive general education in mixed classes together with children with disabilities and special educational needs.



SECTION 2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides information on the structures and features of the whole education system that influence the development and implementation of inclusive education in the country.

2.1 Overview of the education system

Since the restoration of its independence in 1990, Lithuania has implemented substantial reforms towards inclusive educational practices on both legislative and also practical levels. Lithuania's strategic education documents are focused on the actualisation of inclusion in the field of education and are consistent with the main international provisions of inclusive education.

The inclusion in education principle is defined in the amendment of the *Law on Education*: 'Inclusion – the education system enables everyone to be educated, develop their powers and abilities, receive the help they need, experience success in learning, in social, cultural and/or other activities, and not be discriminated against because of the diversity of educational needs and/or educational assistance needs'.

Strategic and action plans for the development of inclusive education are being prepared, which include specific measures for the development of inclusion, monitoring and evaluation of processes, and other amendments to the *Law on Education* related to transformations in the provision of educational assistance are planned.

The main challenge faced is the need to prepare for ensuring inclusion in education in all pre-school and general education schools from September 2024. There are efforts needed to minimise barriers to learning for children with special educational needs. It is necessary to expand support systems in schools, admit more educational support professionals and teaching assistants to schools and allocate money to their salaries, adapt the school environment for inclusive education, and improve the qualification of all teachers and their competences so that they can work in the classroom with children with special needs. *Preparation for inclusion in 2021–2024 Action Plan* has been created which envisages a suite of measures necessary for the development of inclusive education: adaptation of school infrastructure, provision of necessary teaching tools, the establishment of advisory assistance and additional educational assistance positions in schools, strengthening the training of qualified specialists. The number of children with special educational needs who have received educational assistance grows; however, the educational system is not capable of providing assistance to all who are in need of it – in 2021, 78.4 per cent received educational assistance of all general education students who have been identified as needing assistance ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). Lithuania, ratifying in 2010 the United Nations Convention of Persons with Disabilities' rights (2006), together with other countries is obliged to ensure that, in the implementation of disabled persons' right to education, the conditions would be properly adapted to the needs of these persons. The data for 2021 show that the physical environment of the country's general education schools and vocational training institutions is not suitable for inclusive education. Of the 957 general education schools,



only seven were fully adapted for students with movement disabilities ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). Therefore, the main challenges are related to the need to adapt the school environment for the learning of children with various special educational needs in a short period of time, to accept the necessary number of educational support specialists and teacher assistants. Another problem is society's attitudes. [Representative survey](#) carried out by order of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsmen in 2022, shows that less than half (43%) of Lithuanian residents agree with the statement that children with disabilities and special educational needs should study together with everyone in general classes; 25% have no opinion, and almost one third (31%) of the respondents would not agree that their own child(ren) should receive general education in mixed classes together with children with disabilities and special educational needs.

For persons who don't have lower secondary education

- Obtain professional qualification (for persons older than 16 years); duration of studies is 2 years.
- Obtain professional qualification and lower secondary education (for persons younger than 16 years); duration of studies is 3 years.

For persons who have lower secondary education

- Obtain professional qualification. Duration of studies is 2 years.
- Obtain professional qualification and upper secondary education. Duration of studies is 3 years.

For persons who have upper secondary education

- Obtain professional qualification. Duration of studies is 1–2 years

For persons with special educational needs, who have completed an individualised lower secondary education programme

- Social skills training programme is offered. Duration of studies is 3 years.

Source: [National Agency for Education, 2020](#)

Vocational education and training can be organised in school or apprenticeship formats.

Children can attend public schools, which are run by municipalities or by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, or private schools run by private service providers. Admission to general education programmes is granted by the school head and the admissions commission. Children are admitted to schools in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for Consecutive Learning according to General Education Programmes approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. Priority is given to children who live in the area assigned to a particular school. The remaining places may be filled by other children regardless their living location, with priority going to children with special educational needs, children whose brothers and sisters are already learning at the school, and those children who live closest to the school.



For secondary education, children can choose to attend any school, but the priority is given to children who have already completed primary education at the same school and children who live closest to the school. More specialised schools and private schools select their students according to their motivation and previous grades, and some schools also have entry exams.

Table 1. Statistics on educational institutions providing regular education

Type of educational institution in English	ISCED levels provided	Main orientation of the programmes provided	Total number of educational institutions	Municipal schools	State-governed schools	Private independent schools
Pre-school	0	(-)	720	549	2	169
Primary school	1	(-)	125	102	0	23
Pre-gymnasium	1, 2	G	171	166	0	5
Lower secondary education school	1, 2	G	253	221	6	26
Gymnasium	2, 3	G	399	349	20	30
VET institution	2, 3, 4	V	65	0	60	5

Source: [Education Management Information System](#) (2021/2022 school year)

ISCED= [International Standard Classification of Education](#)

The number of schools is decreasing, as the school network is constantly reorganised, reducing the number of small schools in order to efficiently use material resources.

Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. By that time the learner will have usually finished the course of lower secondary education (10 grades).

Statistics on separate educational institutions providing special needs education

Type of educational institution in English: Special school

ISCED levels provided: 0, 1, 2, 3

Main orientation of the programmes provided: G

Total: 42

Number of students: 3,694



Source: [Education Management Information System](#): Special schools and number of students in it and part of students in the municipality 2021/2022 school year

2.2 Specific features that are present within the education system

Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway (i.e. streaming learners by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools)

Not present.

There are no legal provisions that would force streaming learners by abilities into different types of provision or school. There are arts gymnasiums, conservatories, private schools that have entry requirements (exams), and the applicants have to demonstrate their abilities/talents in order to study in such specialised schools.

*Upon adoption of the amendments of the Law on Education (Law Amending Articles 5, 14, 21, 29, 30, 34 and 36 of Law No I-1489 on Education and Supplementing it with Article 45-1, 30/06/2020 No XIII3268 all general education schools will have to accept all pupils without any exceptions. Until 1 September 2024, a school, if it is unable for objective reasons to guarantee a learner in compulsory education programmes the psychological, special pedagogical, special, or social pedagogical assistance, has the legal opportunity to propose to them to study in another school (article 29 of the *Law on Education*). It means that schools have the right to refuse to admit a learner, claiming that school is not adjusted to the learner needs. The amendments of the *Law on Education* abolish this discriminatory provision and from 1 September, 2024, the schools must ensure the access to education for a student with special educational needs by providing psychological, special pedagogical, special, social pedagogical assistance, social, health care and other services, providing educational technical support tools at school, special teaching tools, adapting the educational environment (physical, informational) and by other ways, established by the *Law* (entry into force on 01/09/2024; source: [Amendments of the Law on Education](#)).*

'Double-shift' patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend for either a morning or afternoon session)

Source: [GEM country report](#)

In nine municipalities (out of 60 municipalities) there are schools in which learners have to study in the second shift. Mostly the learners have to study in the second shift in secondary education programmes – 1.6 per cent of all learners studying in these programmes, it is less common in other programmes (0.6 per cent of lower education and 0.2 per cent of primary education learners) (source: [Review 2018](#) pdf, page 38, figure 9.4).

Grade retention (i.e. holding learners back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible support that enables learners to progress with their peers)

Source: [GEM country report](#)

An Order of the Minister of Education and Science of 8 May 2012 No V-766 'On alteration of the order of the Minister of Education and Science of 5 April 2005 No. ISAK- 556' On



approval of the description of the procedure for continuous learning under general education programmes' describes the rules of grade retention:

At the end of the educational process, teachers suggest that the school head makes a decision about the student's further education: move to a higher grade, leave to repeat the curriculum or assign additional work to the student. When allocating additional work to a student, teachers: agree on the duration of the additional work, the forms and methods of consultation, the time, the student's reporting and the date of the reconsideration; reconsider the student's achievements if the additional work has been assessed unsatisfactorily or the student has not reported on time, and submits a proposal to the school head; listen to and take into account the suggestions and wishes of the parents (guardians, caregivers) of the student, except for the student studying according to the general adult education programme, regarding the assignment of additional work.

- A pupil in the final grade of primary, basic and secondary education is considered to have completed the curriculum if they have satisfactory annual assessments of all subjects of the respective curriculum according to the curriculum; they are not promoted to a higher grade.
- A student in the final grade of a primary education programme with an unsatisfactory annual assessment of at least one subject is left to repeat the final grade of the primary education programme in the final grade.
- A person studying according to the adult primary education programme may study only those individual subjects of the education programme, the annual assessment of which is unsatisfactory, in the forms of learning established by the Minister of Education and Science.
- A student in the final grade of a basic education programme who has an unsatisfactory annual assessment of at least one subject is left to repeat it in the final grade of the basic education programme.
- A final grade student of the secondary education programme with at least one unsatisfactory annual assessment of a subject is not allowed to repeat the secondary education programme, they may study the subjects for which the annual assessment is unsatisfactory in the forms of learning established by the Minister of Education and Science.
- A secondary education programme's pupil who has dropped out of school in the current school year for important reasons justified by the head of the school may study in the same school year in the same part of the curriculum or continue the dropped-out learning.
- If a student repeats the entire curriculum of the school year for the second year, the annual assessments of the subjects of that class (school year) they hold are considered invalid.
- If a student does not want to repeat all the subject programmes of that class, they may study only those subjects of the curriculum for which the annual assessment is unsatisfactory in the forms of learning established by the Minister of Education and Science.



Multiple languages of instruction

Source: [GEM country report](#)

The general curricula and curricula provide preconditions for ethnic minority students to learn their mother tongue, including Lithuanian, and to achieve educational outcomes appropriate to their abilities. The education process is organised according to whether the school has legalised a teaching *of* a minority language or it legalised a teaching *in* a minority language. In schools where the teaching of a minority language is legalised, it is taught according to the mother tongue programme; subjects other than foreign languages are taught in Lithuanian; some electives may be taught in a minority language. In schools that teach in the language of the national minority, basic and secondary education programmes are conducted in the form of bilingual education: the language of the national minority and the Lithuanian language. Each school ensures a minimum number of subjects taught in Lithuanian by law.

Specific policies on access to compulsory education in local schools (i.e. school selection policies)

Source: [GEM country report](#)

There are local policy regulations regarding admitting children to the schools. According to the Law on Education (Article 58), every local authority must ensure to each child a possibility to attend a necessary educational programme and receive a necessary educational support. So, this article establishes the municipality's obligation to ensure that all children in the municipality access compulsory education programmes.

According to Article 29 of the *Law on Education*, the learner must be admitted to the general education school that serves the territory assigned to it by the owner. Only students with severe and very severe special educational needs can be admitted to special schools. For some schools, as an exception, selection can be carried out, as for art schools, Lyceum, etc. The admission procedure for them is determined by the founder, in compliance with the limitations provided by the law.

However, grouping pupils by ability is a common practice in lower secondary schools that risks increasing the performance gap between students from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds (source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

2.3 Public and private authorities responsible for different types of provision

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: [FRIES Country Report](#) for Lithuania

Source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 29

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Pre-school education, which is listed under non-formal education, is not compulsory except when it is stated that a child lives in a social risk family.



Pre-school education institutions and general education schools, freelance teachers and other education providers provide the pre-school education curriculum. This can be a state/municipal provider as well as a non-state provider.

Pre-school education may be made mandatory for children living in families at social risk. Mandatory pre-school education for children in families at social risk is the Government's attempt to reduce inequalities in academic achievement during the school year and to ensure the safety of these children.

Pre-primary education is compulsory for all children in Lithuania since 1 September 2016, and is intended to help improve their academic achievements and social inclusion. The usual age for pre-primary education is 6 years old. Parents can opt to send their children to pre-primary education a year earlier, but not before they are 5 years old.

Pre-primary institutions and general education schools, freelance teachers and other education providers provide the pre-primary education curriculum. This can be a state/municipal provider as well as a non-state provider. Pre-primary education is organised according to the programme of pre- primary education prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. This programme sets out goals, objectives and implementation measures to ensure quality education for children.

Every child in Lithuania is entitled to at least 20 hours of ECEC services a week funded by the state, with the rest of the time being financed by a public ECEC provider (for example, the municipalities). Municipalities have the right to determine the fees for education, meals or other services provided to children participating in ECEC. In cases where children do not obtain placements in public ECEC, some municipalities provide EUR 100 compensation for children to attend private ECEC.

General education

Primary education, Lower secondary education, Upper secondary education is organised according to the programmes prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

The **primary education** curriculum is four years long (Grades 1–4). General education schools can offer a preparatory learning year for pupils with special educational needs, i.e. a child finishes grades 1 and 2 in three years.

General education schools, other schools or other education providers provide the primary education curriculum, and this can be a state/municipal or a non-state provider.

Lower secondary education consists of two parts. Part I lasts four years (Grades 5–8) and Part II lasts two years (Grades 9–10 or Gymnasium grades I–II). A lower secondary education is acquired after finishing the lower secondary education curriculum and passing an assessment of lower secondary education achievements.

General education schools and other schools or education providers provide the lower secondary education curriculum. These can be state/municipal providers as well as non-state providers.

The upper secondary curriculum lasts for two years (Grades 11–12 or Gymnasium grades III–IV), comprising compulsory and optional general education subjects and vocational education and training modules. If the upper education curriculum is organised along with vocational education and training, it lasts longer than two years. An upper secondary



education is acquired after finishing the upper secondary education curriculum and passing Matura examinations.

General education schools and other schools or education providers provide the upper secondary education curriculum. This can be a state/municipal provider as well as a non-state provider.

In Lithuania, the category of private (non-state) schools includes only institutions founded by a legal person that is not the state or a municipality. These schools may have the status of a public establishment and are eligible for the 'class basket'. 'Class basket' funds for private schools are allocated from the state budget to the municipality in whose territory the private schools operate, and the schools have to report to the municipality for the use of these funds.

The National Audit Office checks how effectively private schools use the 'class basket' state funds received and whether they are used according to their intended purpose.

The education funds are allocated from the state budget to cover the expenses necessary for the educational process. They are allocated to all general education schools, regardless of their affiliation. Maintenance funds are the responsibility of the owner of the school. Most private schools' maintenance funds come from the school's founders or the learners themselves. Some private schools receive maintenance funds from the ministry of Education, Science and Sport so these schools have to report on the use of these funds to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

(Sources: National Agency for School Evaluation, 2015. OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools. [School Resources Review; Education in the country and regions 2020. Financing. p. 52](#)).

Despite the fact that private schools receive a 'class basket' for their pupils' education, they may also charge fees for covering other education-related costs. The amount for this additional contribution is determined by the school founder. The fee is paid on a contractual basis.

Article 67 of the *Law on Education* stipulates that non-state and non-municipal educational institutions of all traditional religious communities are eligible for the 'class basket' funds and the school maintenance funds from the state budgetary funds, if this is stipulated in the international agreement between the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the religious community. So far, there is one [Agreement](#) on Co-operation in Education and Culture, signed in 2000 between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania (see Article 9 of the agreement).

The sector of private (non-state) education is not large in Lithuania but it has been gradually expanding. In the 2021/2022 school year, there were 107 private and 956 state and municipality education institutions from pre-school education to higher education institutions, and the share of non-state education institutions was 11.2% ([Official statistics database](#)).

There is an expansion of the number of students enrolled in private schools, which increased by 49.2% between 2015 and 2020 (EU: 4.7%). The share of primary and secondary school students (ISCED 1–3) attending private schools is relatively low as it stood at 4.4% in 2020 (source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).



2.4 Levels of autonomy open to educational institutions – schools, local authorities, school maintainers, etc. – within the system

Eurydice 2.7 Administration and governance at central and/or regional level

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: National Agency for School Evaluation, 2015. OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools ([School Resources Review](#)).

Municipal level

Municipal institutions implement the national education policy in the municipality. Lithuania's municipalities are responsible for the implementation of the state education policy and set long-term goals and action plans for education development. Municipal councils and administrations are the founders of schools providing pre-school, pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary education, organise non-formal and informal education for children and adults. Municipal institutions also ensure conditions to implement compulsory education, e.g. organises and co-ordinates the provision of educational assistance to the pupil, teacher, family and school; bears responsibility for school transport and catering.

In order to promote society's participation in shaping and implementing education policy, councils for education can be established. The pupils, teachers, parents (guardians, caregivers), social partners, education providers and/or their associations are represented in the municipal education council. Municipal education council analyses how the municipality implements national education policy, approves long-term education goals and gathers society to reach these goals.

School level

According to the *Law on Education*, the school founder (state, municipality or private entity) supervises school activities, and the quality of education is a joint responsibility of the school and the owner. The *Law on Education* sets forth provisions for school self-governance and singles out the school's council as the school's highest self-governance body, representing learners, teachers, parents (guardians, caregivers) and representatives of the local community. The school council has decision-making power with regards to school activities and funding, and other issues as defined by school statutes.

A member of the school council can be a person who has the knowledge and ability to help achieve the school's strategic goals and fulfil the school's mission.

Every year, the school council evaluates the annual activity report of the head of the school and submits its decision on the report to the institution that implements the rights and obligations of the school owner or its authorised institution. If, for two years in a row, the school council assesses the activities of the school head unsatisfactorily, the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the school owner or its authorised institution will decide upon dismissal of the school head.

Other school self-governance bodies (Teachers' Council, Pupils' Council, Parents' – Foster Parents', Guardians' – Council) may also function at school.



2.5 General mechanisms for funding schools

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: [GEM country report](#), 2.5 sub-section

Source: [FPIES Country report](#) for Lithuania

Institutions provide funding and its share

The state funds education from the state budget. This is a purposive state subsidy – a basket, part of which is directly allocated to the school, and municipalities receive a smaller part for further reallocation. Additionally, through different programmes, the state can allocate investment funds for the development of education.

Formula for allocating resources

In 2018, a **mixed funding method** changed the ‘pupil’s basket’. Starting from 1 September 2019, a mixed funding method has been applied to fund pre-primary, pre-school and general education curricula in state, municipality and private schools. It is a basket of basic education costs, linked with the implementation of education content. This means that a formula is calculated for each school according to the actual number of hours needed to implement the education plan.

The Government approved the Rules for calculation, allocation and application of teaching funds.

This is a fixed state subsidy to cover teaching costs. Teaching funds contain:

- **Funds for the implementation of an education plan.** In principle, these are funds for salaries calculated according to the number of teachers needed for the implementation of an education plan.
- **Funds for reducing the difference between education funding needs between schools.** This is 2.4% of the funds for the implementation of the education plan. These funds can be used to increase teachers’ salaries, improve education quality and accessibility, for example to fund home-schooling, or to introduce various forms of pre-school and pre-primary education. If necessary, learning a foreign language in smaller groups than set out in the General Education Plans can be funded. In addition, municipalities can fund measures that are aimed to reduce learning differences for pupils from an adverse social, economic, cultural environment.
- **Funds for other education needs.** These funds are allocated separately for municipalities and schools for education needs.

Municipalities receive funds to organise and manage the educational process; provide education aid in schools and in pedagogical psychological aid institutions (these are funds for preventive programmes, education aid specialists, implementation of the educational process, when it becomes more expensive due to children with special education needs, education aid for migrants); assess learning achievements; or to fund curricula supplementing formal education.



Schools receive funds to buy textbooks and other education supplies and to additionally fund the educational process when pupils learn in a national minority language or in the state language in a multilingual environment; for pupils' cognitive activities and professional orientation; for the improvement of qualifications for teachers and others participating in the educational process; and for the introduction and usage of information and communication technologies (ICT). The funds for this group are calculated according to the real number of pupils.

When teaching funds are calculated, in pre-school, pre-primary and every general education class, the basic size of a group (maximum size) is set and the minimum possible number of children/pupils in the group/class is indicated. In addition, a conditional size of a group/class is indicated, i.e. several class options are listed, indicating the number of pupils in them. According to the class size, the number of contact hours per year is indicated. Knowing these indicators and the number of average contact hours for a teacher per year, the number of teachers needed for a class is calculated. In the calculation formula, the teacher's salary's factor, which depends on experience and category of qualification, is applied. Basically, the teaching funds are tied to the basic amount of the salary.

Schools do not have to calculate the allocated funds themselves. There are special formulas for that, and registry data is used.

The school is accountable to the school founder for the purpose-specific use of the funds. The founder also has the right to check whether the school uses the received funds according to their intended purpose. In municipal schools, this function is performed by the Internal Audit Service.

Schools in Lithuania lack financial autonomy, as their legal form is a budgetary body. This implies that the budget is planned and implemented in accordance with the *Law on Budgeting*. At the end of the year, the budget funds in accounts controlled by appropriations managers and subordinate bodies and other entities are returned to the budget (except for unused appropriations for financing specialised programmes and for completing construction works) ([FPIES Country report](#) for Lithuania, p. 6.).

Non-formal education pupil's basket

In 2011, a pilot project aimed at testing the principle of the non-formal education pupils' basket was implemented in five municipalities. On the grounds of the experience gained and the results of the project, the non-formal education pupil's basket was introduced in October 2015.

'Pupil's basket' funds for the non-formal education of children can be used for teachers' salaries and for social security contributions and expenses for teaching materials and other expenditures that are directly related to the implementation of non-formal education programmes for children. In January 2022, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport approved a new [procedure](#) for financing and administration of children's informal education programmes. Since March 2022, all informal education programmes are assigned to municipal and national-level programmes. It is recommended that the municipality-level programmes set a 'basket' size from EUR 15 to 20. A EUR 20 basket is recommended for the national level programmes. An important innovation is that



children with medium and high special educational needs will be allocated a double 'basket' of informal education programmes, i.e. EUR 30–40.

2.6 Specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: [Calculation of education funds, 2018](#)

When calculating the educational funds, different coefficients are applied 1) for the learners with special educational needs, depending on special educational needs severity; 2) for migrants.

Funds from the state budget are allocated for the education, catering and transportation of children experiencing social risk who are assigned compulsory education according to the pre-school education programme, in order to ensure their pre-school education in a state, municipal or non-state school.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: [GEM country report](#), 2.5 sub-section

Additional funding is allocated:

- If pupils learn pre-school and pre-primary education curricula in special schools or special groups, the basic education funds are doubled.
- The actual number of pupils with major or severe special educational needs learning pre-school or pre-primary education curricula in general groups is doubled.
- Basic education funds are increased by 5% for pupils learning pre-primary curricula in an ethnic minority language or learning its language.
- For state or municipality schools implementing land or sea cadets' curricula or its elements, also specialised primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education with engineering curricula, which do not have joint classes. In these cases, the indexation factors of the conditional number of teachers needed for a class are increased by 10%.
- For special education centres intended for the whole country's or region's pupils with special educational needs. In this case, the indexation factors for the conditional number of teachers needed for a class are increased by 5%.

Financial support for learners' families:

- The provision of free school meals (breakfast, lunch and meals at daytime summer camps organised by schools) ([Law on Social Assistance to Pupils](#)).
- The provision of basic school supplies ([Law on Social Assistance to Pupils](#)).
- Other support: In order to ensure that schools are accessible to all pupils, municipalities compensate transportation expenses.

Pupils have the right to free school meals and support to purchase basic school supplies if the average income for family members is less than 1.5 of the state-supported income.



Financial support for families of pupils with special educational needs:

- The founder of the school arranges for the free transportation of pupils with special educational needs to school and back home according to its regulations.

Education fee reduction in pre-school education institution

The payment for the children's upkeep in pre-school institutions (except private ones) is reduced by 50% in the event that:

- the child (children) has (have) only one parent;
- the family is raising three or more children;
- a child has major or severe special educational needs;
- a child is ill with cancer, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy or severe allergy;
- both parents have up to 40% working capacity level;
- the child is growing up in a family of students where one of the parents is a full-time student of the daytime department of an educational institution.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system features and structures for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the impact of policy-making, structures and processes at national, regional, local and school levels on inclusive education practice.

The management of the educational system has been improved during the last decades. There has been a shift from over-regulation towards greater involvement of the participants of the educational system in making major management decisions and empowering them by increasing trust. The self-governance of the schools is strengthened by the creation of a school's council as the school's highest self-governance body. It represents learners, teachers, parents and local community, and has decision-making power in regard to school activities and funding, and other issues as defined by school statutes.

The Lithuanian education system is gradually improving, concerning the inclusion of vulnerable groups into education. Special attention is paid to the learners with special educational needs; some means are foreseen for the inclusion of children living in families at social risk:

- The municipalities are responsible for the provision of formal education up to 16 years, but for learners with special educational needs until the age of 21, including non-formal education, and transportation to educational institutions. When admitting children to the schools, the priority is given to the children who live in the area assigned to a particular school, to the children with special educational needs, and children whose brothers and sisters are already learning at the school.



- The schools are responsible for organising the education process, education content and means. The teachers adapt the core curriculum to the children's individual needs.
- Pre-school education may be made mandatory for children living in families at social risk, with the aim to reduce inequalities in academic achievement during the school year and to ensure the safety of these children.
- Pre-primary education is compulsory for all children in Lithuania. General education schools can offer a preparatory learning year for pupils with special educational needs, i.e. a child finishes grades 1 and 2 in three years.
- The general curricula provide pre-conditions for ethnic minority students to learn their mother tongue, including Lithuanian, and to achieve educational outcomes appropriate to their abilities.

The general curriculum is adapted for students with special educational needs who are educated together with other students. Schools provide special pedagogical, psychological, and social pedagogical assistance; teacher assistants are assigned for the learners with special educational needs who need such assistance. Schools organise transportation of students with special educational needs to school. The aim is to integrate children with special educational needs into mainstream education; but there are also special educational institutions, which are mostly attended by students with high and very high special needs and disabilities. In 2021, 89.3% of pre-primary and general education students with special educational needs were enrolled in mainstream education schools' general classes, 3.1% in general education schools' special classes; 7.6% of students with special educational needs were educated in special schools. However, the integration of the students with disabilities into mainstream education is more challenging. In 2021, in mainstream education schools' general classes educated 49.8% of pre-primary and general education students with disabilities; however, more than one third (36.4%) were educated in special schools and 13.8% in general schools' special classes. The aim is to integrate children with special educational needs into mainstream education and decrease the number of special schools. However, even if the number of students educated in an inclusive way in mainstream education institutions is gradually growing, it is difficult to satisfy educational needs of all learners with disabilities in general classes due to the insufficient adaptation of the school environment ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#)). In the National progress plan for 2021–2030, there is a goal set that by 2025, 85%, and in 2030, 90%, of students with disabilities would be educated in an inclusive way.

From 2018 until 2021 the amount of funds used for educational assistance increased by EUR 25.47 million, and from 2019 until 2021 educational assistance funds per student increased by EUR 55.81. More education funds are allocated to students with special educational needs, students learning in national minority languages, students learning in the state language of instruction in a multi-lingual environment and migrants. In 2022, additional funding was allocated for the education of war refugees from Ukraine.

From 2018 until 2022, EUR 24.67 million was disbursed from EU structural funds to ensure the development of inclusive education. It was used for improvement of the infrastructure, special teaching tools' provision, creating inclusive education models and



methodologies, improving the qualifications of pedagogues and educational support specialists, and other inclusive education purposes.

Despite of the fact that additional funding is allocated to the schools, the education assistance provision is still not guaranteed for everyone who needs it; the availability of assistance is insufficient.

The main causes of this problem are (source: [Rationale for the Educational development programme](#)):

1. Students with disabilities do not have the conditions to be educated in general purpose schools. It is related to the attitudes of the school leaders and the school community; insufficient preparation of teachers to work with students with severe special educational needs; physical and informational environment is not adapted for the learners with disabilities; the lack of educational assistance specialists, arising from uncompetitive wages in the labour market.
2. Insufficient competence of teachers and educational assistance specialists to implement inclusive education.
3. Lack of co-ordinated methodological assistance for organising inclusive education.
4. Lack of modern infrastructure to provide educational support.

From 2024, after the amendments to the *Law on Education* which aim to consolidate the principle of inclusion in educational institutions, an additional EUR 220 million investments from EU structural funds and the state budget are planned (Figure 24.4 [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#) and [2021–2024 Inclusion Action Plan](#)).

The description of Educational development programme's progress measure No. 12-003-03-02-01 '[Implementing inclusive education](#)' (project) foresees the activities which will be financed in 2021–2027 from the funds provided in the Investment programme. In total, EUR 108.5 million is planned to be allocated to the activities provided in the progress programme. In 2023–2029, it is planned to create and implement innovative methods of inclusive pre-school, pre-primary, general education, vocational training and the provision of necessary assistance, creating suitable conditions for inclusive education for students with various educational needs. It is expected that the implementation of activities will be started in the third quarter of 2023. The value of the planned projects – EUR 33.2 million. Also, it is predicted:

- to improve the educational conditions of persons with various needs who experience exclusion, by providing educational and co-ordinated services. The activities will be started in the second quarter of 2024, value of projects – EUR 32.6 million;
- to develop up to ten regional education support centers; activities start in the second quarter of 2023; value of projects – EUR 12.4 million;
- to increase the availability of pre-school and full-day school services for persons experiencing exclusion; activities start in the fourth quarter of 2023; value of projects – EUR 30.2 million.



In addition to the mentioned activities, in the new period, in accordance with the regional progress measure 12-003-03-02-17 (RE) 'Developing multifaceted education through full-day school activities' will create and adapt full-day school spaces for students of various needs (including those with special educational needs students). Planned allocation value is EUR 29.4 million. Also, according to the regional progress measure 12-003-03-01-23 (RE) 'Increasing access to education for children experiencing exclusion', EUR 17.65 million is allocated for upgrading the infrastructure and EUR 10 million for the purchase of targeted vehicles (yellow buses), easily adapted to transport the people with disabilities.



SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This section provides information on the overall framework of legislation and policy governing the whole of the education system in the country.

3.1 Is there a single legislation and policy framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

Yes.

3.1a Description of the single legislation and policy framework

The [Law on Education](#) of the Republic of Lithuania is the key document regulating education system in Lithuania.

The structure of the vocational education and training (VET) system, the design, management and award of qualifications, organisation and management of VET, as well as VET funding are all set out in the [Law on Vocational Education and Training](#).

The [Law on Higher Education and Research](#) establishes the state regulation of higher education and research.

Education is an integral component of the development of the state and society. The aim of focusing the general education system on the development of creativity, citizenship and leadership has been noted as one of the key changes in [Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030'](#).

The Lithuanian political parties emphasise that education is a key priority of the Lithuanian state as a foundation for the country's progress and public good in the [Agreement on National Education Policy \(2021–2030\)](#).

3.1b Overview of the general education legislation and policy framework guiding the whole system

Not applicable.

3.1c Overview of the specific education legislation and policy framework impacting on the inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: [GEM country report](#), pp. 17–21

The [Law on Education](#) (1991, enacted): The *Law on Education* specifies that every foreigner who has been granted a right to reside or temporarily settle in Lithuania is entitled to education in the state language and a possibility to learn it, whereas those who wish to study in the language of any ethnic minority or learn it may choose a school in which the education process is conducted and some subjects are taught in the language of the ethnic minority concerned.

The *Law on Education* also specifies that education must be available to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds experiencing social exclusion, including children from low income families, children of refugees, school drop-outs, unemployed persons, individuals



released from prison, as well as persons who are undergoing treatment for alcohol and drug addiction and people who have problems fitting into society.

Amending Law on Education, No. 38-1804 Valstybės žinios (Official Gazette) 2011 (2011, enacted): *Law on Education* was adopted, setting out the objectives of education, the principles of the education system, the fundamentals of the educational system structure, educational activities and relations in education, as well as state commitments in the area of education.

Article 14 of the said *Law* stipulates that the purpose of educating pupils with special educational needs is to help a pupil develop and learn according to their abilities and to attain an education level and acquire a qualification, by recognising and developing their abilities and capacities. The groups of pupils with special educational requirements shall be defined and their special educational needs shall be divided into low, medium, high and very high in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Health, and Minister of Social Security and Labour. For pupils with special educational requirements, the programmes of general education, vocational training and higher education are adapted in accordance with their special educational needs.

The education of pupils with special educational needs is implemented by all the schools providing compulsory and universal education, other providers of education and, in exceptional cases, by schools (forms) intended for pupils with special educational needs. This law also guarantees the accessibility of education to pupils with special educational needs: if a pupil's parents (guardians/caregivers) so desire, the pupil is enabled to attend a pre-school education establishment, a general education school, a vocational training school or any other state or municipal/regional school intended for pupils with special educational needs.

The accessibility of education is also ensured by adapting the school environment, by offering psychological, special pedagogical, special and social pedagogical assistance, by providing schools with technical aids to education and special teaching aids and by other means prescribed by law. Pupils who are unable to attend a general education school due to illness or pathology are given an opportunity to study at an in-patient health care facility or at home.

The *Law Amending the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (2011)* is an important law supporting the inclusion of vulnerable children in Lithuania. This law foresees the co-ordinated provision of services to the child and their parents. Municipal administrations are encouraged to work more effectively to ensure the well-being of the child, to remove interdepartmental barriers between forms of educational assistance, municipalities, state institutions and establishments, as well as other organisations and the non-governmental sector, to assure inter-institutional co-operation. Inter-institutional attention to vulnerable children and their parents is intended to reduce social exclusion and drop-out from schools, as well as improving parental skills and involvement in children's education, and improving children's psycho-emotional well-being while in educational institutions. The law also seeks to better include children with disabilities and children with migrant backgrounds into general education schools.



Source for the last paragraph: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, pp. 60–61

Children’s education in minority languages and the teaching of minority languages (2012): In 2012, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport developed guidelines to improve children’s education in minority languages and the teaching of minority languages. The guidelines specify arrangements made for setting a course towards the development of education in minority languages with the goal of preserving the country’s cultural diversity. For the first time it was stated that Lithuanian schools should become more open and extend their communication with schools providing education in national minority languages.

Rights of migrants’ children for education:

- 2011, enacted: Article 30 of the *Law on Education* states that the children of a person having the right of permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Lithuania shall be provided with the opportunity of learning the state language, of receiving instruction in the state language and, where possible, of learning their native language.
- 2003: The Law No. 789 (2003) ‘On the education of the children of foreigners who arrived to work or live in the Republic of Lithuania in general education schools’ ensures the right and organisation of education of children of foreign citizens in general education schools following the general curriculum and to receive instructions in the state language, to learn the state language, and where possible, to learn their native language.
- 2005: The Law No. ISAK-556 ‘On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Continuous Learning in General Education Programmes’ (2005) describes an order of admission to learning under general education programmes.
 - Migrants’ children (children of foreigners and citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, arriving or returning from a foreign country to live in Lithuania) are entitled to receive an additional 30 per cent funding to the student’s basket they are entitled to. The additional funding for migrant children, allocated for no longer than one school year (or for a longer period in cases where student achievement is poorer than expected), should cover the expenses of specialists to help the student’s faster integration into classes of peers. The children with no proficiency in Lithuanian, prior to attending general education school, have an opportunity to learn the Lithuanian language in a special leveling class to bridge the language gap (source: the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport information).
- 2019: In the latest Law No. V-417 on the General education plans for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 school year it is stated that an individual education plan must be created for a learner who came from a foreign country. Article 44 states that the school for a person who completed a part of general, secondary education programme in a foreign country, international organisation or who completed a primary education, general education programme, accepts them to learning following the order described in the law No. ISAK-556 (2005) ‘On the Approval of



the Description of the Procedure for Continuous Learning in General Education Programmes’.

- Article 45 states that If the pupil does not know or speak Lithuanian properly, the school may organise learning the Lithuanian language in an intensive way (in leveling classes, in groups or in other forms), while ensuring that other subjects (such as arts, science, etc.) are learned with peers; intensive study of the Lithuanian language for up to one year (in exceptional cases and longer) or shorter and provision of assistance for a student for several (2–4) years; pupil learning with other peers in the designated classroom, providing appropriate education and learning support; learning in other ways offered by the school in co-ordination with the pupil's parents (guardians).

Children rights (2019, enacted): ‘Law on the Basis of protection of the rights of the child’ and its amendments requires that parents, other representatives of the child, state and municipalities’ institutions, NGOs and other persons should follow the principle of priority of the best interests of the child. The interests encompass guarantee for a child to health and education, ensuring special needs as well. It also states that education is obligatory and their parents and other representatives shall create necessary conditions for a child to be educated up to 16-years-old. The child's parents or other representatives of the child who do not comply with this requirement shall be liable in accordance with the procedure established by law.

Promotion of non-discrimination action plan 2017–2019 (2017–2019): An Order by the Minister of Social security and labour ‘On the approval of the action plan for the promotion of non-discrimination in 2017–2019 (2017 May 15 No. A1-250) describes measures to promote non-discrimination. The action plan includes training and educational events on integration into society and equal opportunities, activities promoting the integration of national minorities into the labour market, and intercultural knowledge and meaningful cultural heritage of national minorities and immigrants, social advertising on non-discrimination and public transport, other activities.

National Education Development Programme for 2021–2030 (2021, enacted) (source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, pp. 27, 54, 61): The programme sets out a plan to improve the quality of, and overall access to, education in Lithuania. The programme covers all levels of education.

Relevant issues identified in this programme:

- There is an insufficient proportion of students with special educational needs who receive educational assistance out of all students identified as needing assistance. The proportion of students with special educational needs who get educational assistance is expected to rise to 85 per cent by 2025 and to 97 per cent by 2030, compared with 57.6 per cent in 2019.
- The main areas identified as problematic were lack of competences among teachers, a lack of learning support specialists, and a lack of support for children and their parents.



- Unequal access to education among children with disabilities and children from low-income families. The participation of children with disabilities in general schools is expected to increase to 75 per cent by 2030, compared to 48.6 per cent in 2019. The main areas identified as problematic include a lack of accessibility in schools for children with disabilities, and a lack of opportunities for children from low-income families to enrol in higher education institutions.
- Migrant and returnee children experience difficulty in integrating into the Lithuanian education system. The main issues identified include insufficient preparation of children before arriving in Lithuania, and insufficient help being provided in schools.

To address these issues, additional financing has been allocated.

In the [National Education Development Programme for 2021–2030](#), it is anticipated: ‘3.2. to increase the inclusion and accessibility of education, to ensure a safe environment for every person’. It is expected that the share (percentage) of learners with disabilities educated in general purpose educational institutions (general classes) in 2025 will reach 67.2 per cent; in 2030, 90 per cent.

Children with disabilities and special educational needs will be given priority with regard to enrolment in those schools closest to their home, but their families are also given recommendations regarding what schools might best meet their individual needs, and can choose according to their preference. Nevertheless, it is expected that schools will increase their capacities to enrol children with special educational needs.

Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2021–2023 (2021) (source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 54): One of the goals is to improve the inclusion of children with special educational needs and foreign children under the age of 18 living in Lithuania (indicators and targets set for 2021–2023).

In September 2021, [new amendments to the joint law](#) of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, and the Minister of Social Projection and Labour ‘**Regarding the approval of the description of the procedure for determining and assigning compulsory pre-school education**’ were adopted in relation to compulsory ECEC for children from families at social risk (2021, enacted). This law provides additional financing to municipalities and ECEC providers that enrol children assigned to compulsory ECEC, as it was noted that the biggest barriers to access with regard to the application of compulsory ECEC were a lack of transportation and additional financial burdens such as meals and salaries for accompanying persons.

3.2 Is there a single curriculum framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

No.

3.2a Description of the single curriculum framework

Not applicable.



3.2b Overview of the general curriculum framework

Source: National Agency for Education, 2019. [Guidelines for Updating](#) the General Curriculum Framework

The general curriculum framework is a document governing the content of national level education, which helps to pursue the goals of primary education, basic education and secondary education. The general curriculum framework defines the learning outcomes pursued, laying down the scopes of teaching and learning, and specifying features of levels of attainment of learning outcomes.

The general education curriculum frameworks comprise the introduction common for all curricula and general curricula of subjects being taught integrated to areas of education.

The introduction shall present the following: general provisions covering the goals, tasks of education and the implementation of the education content; pursued (educational) learning outcomes – human values and competences developed having completed primary, basic and secondary education programmes, linking each stage to the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework; development of competences every two school years; evidence of the development of competences at the four levels of achievement (provided in recommendations for the implementation of the programme); provisions for assessing student achievements.

Each area of education, which consists of general curricula of the subjects taught, shall define: the purpose, indicating how this area of education helps to expand students' worldview, and what it means for the development of a person, community, society and the state; the structure, interconnection of subjects constituting it, and their coherence in different stages of education; areas of achievement of subjects; peculiarities of competence development; interconnections with other areas of education.

Subject curricula shall define: the purpose and tasks of the subject; development of student achievements every two school years; integrating elective interdisciplinary topics; features of the four levels of achievements; scopes of the education content shall be presented by distinguishing the content of compulsory subjects (about 70%) and elective subjects (about 30%) to be selected by teachers in light of the capabilities of students and in co-ordination with other teachers. The implementation and proportion of this provision may vary depending on the stage of education, the logic of the discipline, goals, and the teaching tradition. Issues related to the ways of implementing the content of compulsory and elective subjects shall be discussed with subject teachers, experts and described in the general curriculum frameworks and recommendations for their implementation.

The general curriculum framework shall be updated in accordance with the principles of the education system enshrined in Article 5 of the *Law on Education* of the Republic of Lithuania.

Source: [GEM country report](#), p. 64

The National Curriculum was planned to be redesigned following some main principles of the new curriculum:

- The future curriculum will have some degree of flexibility to address the educational needs of different students.



- Since the focus is on the development of student competences, learning progressions will be developed as a tool to allow students to progress through educational stages at their own pace.
- Different levels of students' performance defined in the new curriculum will ensure the participation in formal education for all students.
- There is also some flexibility regarding the teaching content in the new curriculum; the teachers are supposed to select teaching content that is relevant for particular students' interests and capacities.

As to assessment of students' performance, formative assessment is encouraged to enable individual student's progress. The teachers are encouraged to provide feedback and use other assessment methods that support each student's development and growth.

Some external summative assessment will move to digital platforms and will enable more students to participate in it.

In September 2022, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport approved 44 redesigned curricula of the subjects. A total of 47 curricula have been redesigned. The redesigned general curricula follow a competence-oriented direction of education – the student's goal should not only be to acquire knowledge, but also to be able to apply it, to have more skills needed in the modern world. The aim is to develop cognitive, digital, social, emotional and healthy lifestyle, creativity, civic, cultural and communication competences. The learning content in the redesigned curricula is presented by distinguishing between compulsory subject content (about 70 per cent) and optional content (about 30 per cent), which is chosen by the teacher based on the students' abilities and in co-ordination with other teachers. The size of this proportion may vary depending on the level of education, subject logic, goals, and teaching tradition. The redesigned curricula will be implemented Grades 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9, and gymnasium III grade from 2023/2024 academic year, and in the remaining grades from 2024/2025 academic year (source: [Redesigned curricula](#)).

3.2c Overview of specific curriculum framework(s) for different groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: [General educational plans 2021/2022, 2022/2023 for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education programmes](#). Chapter VI describes the organisation of the education of learners with special educational needs: preparation of an individual educational support plan, assessment of learning achievements and progress, provision of educational assistance, teaching at home, and the organisation of education in preparatory classes of special schools.

Source: [The Law on Education](#) Article 14. (5) When necessary general education curricula, vocational training programmes shall be adapted to learners with special educational needs in accordance with the procedure specified in paragraph 1 of this Article, while study programmes shall be adapted in accordance with the procedure laid down by a higher education institution. (6) Learners with special educational needs may complete formal education programmes within a period of time shorter or longer than the period of time set for such programmes; they may study at intervals, complete the said



programmes by way of separate modules. Learners with major and severe special educational needs may study in general education schools (classes) designated for learners with special educational needs until the age of 21.

Source: [GEM country report](#), pp. 53–56

The General Yearly Teaching Plans for lower and upper secondary education programmes specify that the school must respond to the needs of pupils with special educational needs when developing its own Teaching Plan and establish the procedure for meeting those needs: take decisions regarding the learning load of special educational needs pupils (plan obligatory and special lessons) and provision of special education and/or special support measures.

At the school level, the policy of special-needs pupils' integrated education is the responsibility of the school heads, but all the teaching staff are involved in the implementation process. The key provisions of special educational needs pupils' education include:

- application, where possible, of alterations to school building facilities and other specific support measures to cater for the needs of children with limited mobility;
- provision of objectives and ways to meet the needs of children with disabilities in the school activities programme and compliance with the equality of rights principle;
- creation of conditions for teachers' continuing professional development in the field of special educational needs provision;
- involvement of the parents of children with disabilities into the education process, etc.

Primary, basic and secondary curricula are modified and adapted for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Education Development Centre, and the National Agency for Education develop methodological guidance for teachers on how to adapt the general curricula for various types of pupils recognised as having special educational needs. In 2022, it prepared the 'Recommendations regarding the [adaptation of updated general curricula](#) to the learners with special educational needs'.

The teaching methods, syllabus content, teaching plan and organisation of evaluation of pupils' attainments and progression and also procedures for their performance evaluation may be adapted to fit the pupils' special educational needs.

Special educational support (special training) for pupils educated by way of complete integration (in mainstream classes) is provided during lessons, and training in speech therapy is provided after school.

[Eurydice, Lithuania](#)

The General Teaching Plans for lower and upper secondary education programmes specify that the school must respond to the needs of pupils with special educational needs when developing its own Teaching Plan and establish the procedure for meeting those needs: take decisions regarding the learning load of pupils with special educational needs (plan



obligatory and special lessons) and provision of special education and/or special support measures.

In response to the needs of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher adjusts (modifies, adapts or individualises) the general curriculum of separate subjects to tailor it to the pupils' educational needs. They do that with the view of pupils' educational needs and recommendations provided by both the school Child Welfare Commission and the special teacher. If the school has neither of them, the teacher receives guidance and counselling from specialists of the educational psychology service attending to the needs of that school.

Children following the primary education curriculum study moral education (religion or ethics), Lithuanian and a foreign language, mathematics, perception and understanding of the world, art and technologies, music, physical education and other subjects selected at the school's discretion. Pupils following the basic and secondary education curricula study moral education (religion or ethics), Lithuanian and foreign languages, mathematics, information technologies, history, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, art and technologies, music, physical education and other subjects selected at the school's discretion.

When organising the education process for pupils with special educational needs, the school takes account of the following aspects: the pupils' special educational needs and disabilities; form of education (complete or partial integration in mainstream education, provision at home or in institutions of separate special education); curriculum (the General Education Curriculum Framework or the curriculum tailored to the needs of pupils with special educational needs: modified, adapted or individualised); available funds for education and teaching (learning) environment.

When drawing up a teaching plan for the school, a separate class or an individual pupil with special educational needs, the special or general education school providing education to pupils with special educational needs must be guided by the number of weekly lessons allocated for the implementation of the primary education curriculum subjects in the General Teaching Plan. In addition, the school may adjust (from 20 up to 30 per cent) the number of weekly lessons allocated for the implementation of the curriculum subjects, change (reduce or increase) the number of lessons allocated for individual subjects, plan special classes and/or increase the number of lessons allocated for artistic education, the teaching of other subjects and provision of the teacher's additional assistance. For pupils with minor or average mental health difficulties following either the adapted General Curriculum Framework tailored to the needs of pupils with special educational needs or the special primary education curriculum, the school may reduce the minimum number of compulsory lessons per pupil by one to two lessons by increasing the number of hours allocated for non-formal education.

In the course of the school year, the school may take into account the evaluation and advice of the school Child Welfare Commission or educational psychology service and change the number of lessons (hours) allocated for special classes, practical training and individual support, or allocate additional hours for a certain period of time for each individual pupil or group in order to intensify the provision of special educational support or teacher's assistance.



With regard to individual pupils' health issues and recommendations of the school Child Welfare Commission, the school may decide to reduce the duration of lessons by five minutes and spend the time gained on changing the pupils' activities and arranging breaks.

In implementing the formal and non-formal education curricula, the school is free to set the number of pupils with special educational needs in the group based on the funds allocated, the pupils' needs and also the available teaching and learning conditions and teaching aids.

For pupils with complex disabilities when limited intellectual capacity is part of the condition, the teaching plan is drawn up taking into account the limitation of intellectual capacity and planning developmental education assistance for other dysfunctions. To that end, in special developmental classes for pupils recognised as having moderate, significant and very significant intellectual disabilities and pupils with complex disabilities when moderate, significant and very significant intellectual disability is part of the combination, the teacher designs an individual curriculum, and the school may make arrangements for such classes to be engaged in various activities during the school holidays (except summer). Senior pupils engaged in social activity programmes may volunteer and help teachers organise those activities.

On advice from the school Child Welfare Commission and educational psychology service, and subject to the agreement of the pupils' parents, a number of pupils with special educational needs, including those who are deaf and hard of hearing, have average or significant speech and language impairments, pupils with autism (normal intelligence), behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, dyslexia, average or significant limited mobility (motor and support apparatus dysfunctions), limited or impaired intellectual capacity, pupils suffering from mental illnesses as well as pupils with the above-mentioned disorders who are learning at school in the ethnic minority language may not study foreign languages or may take them up later; pupils with hearing disorders and the deaf do not need to learn music; pupils with limited mobility (motor and support apparatus dysfunctions) may be exempt from technology lessons; instead of those subjects, the school may provide for the pupil's special educational needs, organise special classes and provide teacher's additional assistance and allocate additional hours for the teaching of the state Lithuanian language for pupils who are learning at school in the ethnic minority language, as well as for those who are deaf and hard of hearing. All changes in the teaching plan related to exemption of pupils within mainstream education from learning particular subjects are documented by orders issued by school heads.

Pupils with special educational needs who are attending special schools for those who are deaf and hard of hearing, and pupils with impaired vision, impaired speech and other communication impairments, are allocated an additional year of compulsory schooling in a preparatory class in order to achieve, over a longer period of time, the outcomes specified in the General Curriculum Framework. The number of hours allocated for separate subjects may be altered at the school's discretion to meet the child's educational needs while preserving the minimum number of compulsory lessons per week.

For pupils who are deaf and hard of hearing, classes of communication activities (seven classes per week) are organised instead of classes of foreign languages. Those communication activities include the following: Lithuanian, communication and one



lesson per week allocated for the teaching of the Lithuanian sign language. Classes of cognitive activities for those pupils include social and cultural activities, understanding of the natural environment and formation of the elementary mathematical images; classes of artistic activities consist of getting to know the rhythmic patterns of music and fields of art; three lessons per week are allocated for practical activities and two individual lessons per week for each pupil (two to three individual lessons per week for Cochlear implant users) are allocated for the training of pronunciation and development of speech and hearing skills. Individual sessions for the training of pronunciation and development of speech and hearing skills are conducted during the classes of communication and cognitive activities (the contents of the training sessions and the respective classes should be consistent).

The teaching plan for children with speech, language and other communication needs must include special classes for the development of pronunciation, speech and hearing. One class per each pupil is allocated for individual training.

The teaching plan for children with visual impairments must contain a special class for habilitation training (development of sensomotorics and eyesight).

The school designs the curriculum for the teaching of shut-in special educational needs pupils at home by selecting the corresponding areas of education, tailoring the syllabuses of the subjects taught to those pupils' aptitudes and educational needs and taking into account the recommendations of doctors.

While educating deaf or hard of hearing children at home, surdopedagogues or speech and language therapists together with the parents (foster parents or guardians) adjust the curriculum to the child's individual needs, develop the child's skills and provide counselling to the parents taking into account the individual abilities of the child and the level of their hearing impairment.

The number of hours allocated for at home education of pupils with special educational needs with **minor** mental health difficulties, as well as pupils with special educational needs with **minor** mental health difficulties who are learning in an ethnic minority language, amounts to six hours per week. Those hours are allocated for linguistic, mathematical and social education as well as special lessons to meet the pupil's special educational needs.

The number of hours allocated for at home education of pupils with special educational needs with **moderate, major** and **severe** mental health difficulties, as well as pupils with special educational needs with **moderate, major** and **severe** mental health difficulties who are learning in an ethnic minority language, amounts to six hours per week. Education is organised in separate areas of activities including communication, cognition, orientation, art and practical work. The child is educated at home by a special teacher who, with the view of every child's individual abilities, together with the parents (foster parents or guardians) adjusts the general primary curriculum to the child's individual needs, develops the child's abilities and provides counselling to the parents. In organising education at home for children with major and severe mental health difficulties who are recognised as having limited mobility (motor and support apparatus dysfunctions), one to two hours per week are recommended for therapeutic exercise.



Special educational needs provision at home to the children with special educational needs who are unable to attend pre-school or a general education institution is organised in accordance with the [Procedure for providing special pedagogical assistance for persons under 21 years of age and determining qualification requirements for providers of this assistance](#).

Source: [GEM country report](#), pp. 56–57

If special educational needs are identified for a student – for example, a student has learning difficulties – the school can prepare an adapted programme, and create an individual plan of education.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport developed guidelines to improve children’s education in minority languages and the teaching of minority languages. The guidelines specify arrangements made for setting a course towards the development of education in minority languages with the goal of preserving the country’s cultural diversity. For the first time it was stated that Lithuanian schools should become more open and extend their communication with schools providing education in national minority languages.

The guidelines also encourage schools teaching in minority languages to get involved in joint projects of co-operation among different schools and pupil organisations. In addition, the general curriculum framework for ethnic culture is to be renewed and extended to include ethnic culture elements of those national minorities that have been living in Lithuania for a significant length of time. Preparations are also made to develop folders of the necessary teaching materials by involving members of the ethnic minority communities in the work to be carried out.

[Eurydice, Lithuania](#)

Under the terms of the [Law on Education](#), every foreigner who has been granted a right to reside or temporarily settle in Lithuania is entitled to education in the state language and a possibility to learn it.

Schools of general and non-formal education create conditions for pupils of ethnic minorities to cherish their national, ethnic and linguistic identity, and study their mother tongue, history and culture. In schools of general and non-formal education, the regulations provide a possibility to use, at the request of the parents, the language of a particular ethnic minority as the language of instruction and to study it; the education process may be conducted and certain subjects taught in the language of the ethnic minority concerned. In those schools, the teaching of Lithuanian is an integral part of the curriculum and the number of hours allocated for its teaching may not be fewer than those allocated for the teaching of the mother tongue.

Availability of education to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds afflicted by social exclusion – including children from low-income families, children of refugees, school drop-outs, unemployed persons, individuals released from prison, persons who are undergoing treatment for alcohol and drug addiction, and people who have problems fitting into society – is ensured through provision of social services and educational assistance to them.



Purpose-specific social and educational programmes are implemented by the Government and municipalities either directly or through schools. Those programmes may be initiated and carried out by non-governmental organisations and other legal entities and individuals.

Children living in the Refugee Reception Centre have a right to attend general education schools and institutions of pre-school education. The Refugee Reception Centre creates conditions for its residents to enrol in a free-of-charge programme of the Lithuanian language.

[Eurydice, Lithuania](#)

3.3 Is there a single legislation and policy framework for all teacher education and professional development?

No.

3.3a Description of the single legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Eurydice: 9. Teachers and education staff

3.3b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: [Country overview](#)

Source: [GEM country report](#), p. 72

In Lithuania, teachers are trained in higher education institutions – universities and colleges. The prospective teachers study according to pre-school education, primary education or concrete subject study programmes. Educators working with children with special needs are trained according to special pedagogy study programmes.

Lithuania introduced a revised teacher education model in 2017. The model describes teacher education as a continuum, which begins with initial teacher education and encompasses regular, continuous professional development activities. Clearer pathways towards acquiring teacher qualification are defined through both consecutive and concurrent study programmes, which are complemented by an official induction period for beginner teachers.

On 14 September 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport approved a new description of the [Teacher Training Model](#) (Model) prepared by various stakeholders. Its purpose is to create the pre-conditions for effective and qualitative functioning of teacher training and continuous professional development (CPD) system. The teacher training centres on:

- Complex selection to pedagogical studies. The candidate's learning achievements (competitive score), motivation, personal qualities and values will be assessed.



During the study pedagogical practice, the person's suitability for a profession will be re-evaluated.

- Pedagogical studies (teacher training). Teachers' training will take place in the three strongest higher education institutions. International experts will be involved. Teacher training programmes will be updated; a variety of teaching methods for teachers (concurrent, consecutive, pedagogical professional studies, alternative methods) will be established.
- Professional growth through pedagogical internship, pedagogical activities and improvement of continuous professional development.

Initial education for teachers working in early childhood and school education

Teacher training is described in the *Regulations on Teacher Training*. The new Regulations were adopted on 29 May 2018, and the teacher training system that is described in the Regulations was created in 2018. The Regulations state that Teacher Training Centres and other HE institutions that have co-operation treaties with Centres provide initial teacher education. Three teacher education centres were established to enhance the quality of initial teacher education.

Duration of ITE training programmes

There are various forms of ITE study programmes.

In the case of Bachelor's or Professional Bachelor's integrated pedagogical studies, their duration corresponds to the Bachelor's and Professional Bachelor's requirements. Bachelor's pedagogical studies last for four years (240 ECTS), while Professional Bachelor's pedagogical studies last for three years (210 ECTS).

A study module on pedagogy comprises 60 ECTS. These study credits are usually distributed through one year.

The scope of an educational subject or pedagogical specialisation is no less than 60 ECTS. Up to 180 ECTS can be allocated to a few modules of educational subjects or pedagogical specialisations.

No less than 30 ECTS are given to school (teaching) practice.

When it comes to the education of children with special educational needs, all pedagogical study programmes must include the course on the education of children having special educational needs. Initial Teacher Education includes a subject: 'Diversity of learners, taking into account the context of those with special educational needs (inclusive education) and those who are talented'.

Continuing professional development for teachers working in early childhood and school education

Teachers' conditions of service entitle them to continuing professional development (CPD). The founder of the school ensures that teachers and other staff engaged in the process of education receive remuneration for their CPD for at least five days per year.

This provision is laid down in the *Law on Education*.



The process of continuing professional development comprises non-formal education and self-education for the purpose of acquiring and developing those competences that are necessary for one's professional activities.

On 30 May 2012, the [Teachers' Professional Development Concept](#) (the Concept) was approved by the Minister of Education and Science. The Concept specifies that teachers can accumulate funds provided by the state for their continuing professional development for several years. Schools have the opportunity to have CPD consultants who can help everyone build up a professional development plan.

Every eight years, teachers acquire a right to take a sabbatical leave of up to one year for study or internship, without losing their monthly salary.

Every teacher who works in pre-school or primary school or as a subject, vocational or supplementary informal education teacher must complete at least 60 hours of training in special needs education and psychology. This is stated in the *Requirements for the Qualification of Teachers* (2014-08-29 No. V-774, para 9). From 2019, teachers who work in vocational or supplementary informal education were also required to complete at least 60 hours of training in special needs education and psychology before 31 August 2020 (all teachers already had this obligation). This is stated in the supplement to the *Requirements for the Qualification of Teachers* (2019-07-16 No. V-831).

Incentives

Participation in continuing professional development activities is very important for teachers, as five days of in-service training per year is a necessary pre-condition for a teacher to be appraised and acquire a higher or retain the same qualification category. A higher qualification category leads to a higher salary.

Organisation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport plans funds for teachers' continuing professional development and, in conjunction with other relevant institutions engaged in the process, organises, co-ordinates and undertakes studies on the system of teachers' continuing professional development and performs analysis of the need for arranging professional development events. Each year, some funding from the Ministry for CPD is allocated to special needs education.

Institutions providing teachers' professional development include methodological centres at schools, municipal teacher education centres and professional development providers at higher education institutions. Other institutions, such as non-governmental organisations and agencies under the subordination of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, can also arrange professional development events.

Teachers wishing to attend professional development events can contact people responsible for teachers' appraisal and continuing professional development in their schools or the regional teacher education centres directly. The municipal education authorities and regional teacher education centres regularly provide information about the plans for continuing professional development programmes, seminars and other events.



3.3c Overview of specific legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development, and what and who this specific framework focuses on

Source: [Country overview](#)

A person can become a teacher in various ways. One of these is to participate in a programme implemented in co-operation with HE institutions. In this case, the individual must already have a higher education degree. An example of such a programme is [Teach for All!](#) which is implemented in many countries.

Other possibilities are guaranteed in the amended [Description of requirements for teacher qualifications](#). A person who has a higher education, having completed at least 60 study credits in a subject or pedagogical specialisation module at a higher education institution, or has completed at least 60 study credits in a subject or pedagogical specialisation during their studies, can work as a teacher.

Skills acquired through teaching or non-formal education may also be credited and recognised in accordance with the procedure established by legal acts.

In the absence of a teacher with the necessary qualifications in the school, persons with higher or special secondary education can educate (teach) pupils according to educational subjects (specialisation of education):

- if they have studied at least 30 per cent (18 study credits) of the volume of study credits of the relevant subject(s) (educational specialisation) module or;
- if they have acquired at least 30 per cent (18 study credits) of the competencies of the relevant subject (educational specialisation) module of study credits through non-formal education and/or self-education and;
- they are recognised in accordance with the procedure established by legal acts, for no longer than 3 years, with the acquisition of a teacher's qualification within 2 years from the start of work as a teacher in pre-school education, pre-primary education and general education programmes.

3.4 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners throughout their school careers?

No.

3.4a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all throughout their school careers

Not applicable.

3.4b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners throughout their school careers

Source: EACEA National Policies Platform: [Youthwiki](#)

Source: [Euro-guidance](#)

Source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)



[The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport](#) is responsible for career guidance policy related to the provision of quality career education, information and counselling services for pupils, students, adult learners, etc. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport establishes the procedure for the delivery of career information and careers education in the educational system. The aim is that all pupils and students should have the possibility of receiving services of career guidance in their educational institution, and these services can help them not only to prepare for their future career, but also to plan, develop and assess their career.

[Career education programme \(2014\)](#) determines career education goals, areas and tasks, career competencies – i.e. the whole knowledge and understanding, abilities and attitudes about oneself, opportunities for learning, self-expression and work, career decision-making, career planning, co-ordination with other areas of life and realisation, development and structure of career competencies, guidelines for the development of career competencies, assessment of students' career competencies in schools, in general education and/or vocational training programmes.

In the [General education plans](#) it is foreseen that in grades 9–10, at least 100 lessons per year of the lessons allocated to meet the student's educational needs must be devoted to teaching in an individualised and differentiated manner, and to developing career management competencies. For students with special educational needs, the number of lessons devoted for developing career competencies can be increased.

[Law on Education](#) defines career guidance as one form of educational assistance. The purpose of career guidance is defined in the law as follows: 'by measures of career information, career counselling and career education to help a person to choose education and employment, to acquire career planning and management competences and to actively shape his professional career'. It also states that career guidance shall be provided in most educational institutions (general education schools, vocational training and other educational institutions, career guidance centres and other) in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport together with the Minister of Social Security and Labour, and in higher education schools – in accordance with the procedure laid down by these schools.

In school-based VET tracks, career education is integrated into appropriate vocational subjects (economy, ethics, language subjects, IT, etc.) and the transition skills are developed in co-operation with local employment offices, companies and local youth services.

For higher education, there is no explicit legal framework in career guidance but the student entitlement for individual study plans is included in the legislation for universities. However, there are several HE institutions (e.g. Vilnius University) which provide career guidance services (especially individual consultations on employability tendencies and labour market opportunities) to their students.

Organisation and monitoring of career guidance services in general education schools is managed by local municipalities. The mandate for co-ordination of career guidance services on national level, development of methodology and evaluation of the needs for training and further professional development of guidance counsellors is given to the [Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education](#).



Funding for career guidance services comes from diverse resources: the state budget, ESF funds, and funds from Active Labour Market Resources and the Youth Guarantee Initiative.

General education or vocational education institutions allocate an appropriate number of hours for career guidance services according to their financial opportunities and support of the administration of the institution, usually career education elements.

Career guidance is carried out by schools and vocational information points set up in them. Vocational information is provided by the following specialists: vocational information consultants (professional advisors, social educators and school psychologists), social teachers, vocational teachers, general education school teachers and form teachers.

The need to strengthen the career guidance system is illustrated by the mismatch of skills in the labour market in Lithuania. In Lithuania in 2019, 57.6% of all 30–34-year-old residents had higher education (average in the EU: 40.7%), but there is a clear discrepancy between the graduates' qualifications and the work they do. Only 42% of university graduates and 30% of college graduates worked in jobs requiring higher education qualifications. This shows that it is necessary to strengthen the professional guidance and career planning system for all age groups and people with different educations, to do it purposefully and sustainably, unifying the services of institutions operating in the system and their accessibility ([Rationale for the educational development programme](#)).

For this purpose, in the [National Progress Plan](#) 2021–2030, under the third strategic aim 'To increase the inclusiveness and effectiveness of education to meet the needs of the individual and society', there is an indicator 3.4.8. 'Share of pupils (grades 5–12) who received career guidance services'. In 2018, there were 25.6% of pupils who received these services, and the target value for 2025 is 60%, for 2030 it is 100%.

Lithuania continues to develop a new career guidance model. Career guidance will be compulsory for all students from the first to the final grade in all schools including vocational education schools, and will be provided by career specialists who will work based on a standardised programme. Strengthening career guidance may help improve equity in access to higher education. Making the provision of career guidance mandatory may be a way of promoting social mobility and making more informed decisions, also taking into account labour market trends. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport adopted the qualification requirements for career specialists, and works on the development of the necessary training. The aim was that career specialists who meet new qualification started working in schools from 1 September 2022; however, the transition period for current specialists not meeting the qualification requirements may take longer ([Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

3.4c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education throughout their school careers

Source: [Euro-guidance](#)

The [General education plans](#) foresee that for the learners with special educational needs the number of lessons devoted to developing career competencies can be increased.



3.5 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life?

No.

3.5a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Not applicable.

3.5b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Source: [GEM country report](#), p. 74

Three types of guidance are identified and available:

- -Academic guidance
- -Career guidance
- -Psychological counselling: Psychological assistance to a learner who experiences personal and learning problems is universally rendered by assistance providers who work in close co-operation with the learner's parents (foster parents or guardians) and teachers and provide consultations to them.

An academic or pedagogical guidance can be provided by a subject teacher and/or a special needs education specialist.

Quite often a school psychologist provides pupils with career guidance as well, if the psychologist has a necessary certificate and competence for that.

3.5c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Same as 3.5b

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of the legislative and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the main challenges and opportunities for effectively translating policy into regional, local and school level practice.

The education system in Lithuania has been created and is constantly improved. There is specific education legislation impacting the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion: the laws specify the availability of education to foreigners, ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, children from low-income families, children of refugees, school drop-outs, etc.



The accessibility of education is also ensured by adapting the school environment, by offering psychological, special pedagogical, special and social pedagogical assistance, by providing schools with technical aids to education and special teaching aids, and by other means prescribed by law. Pupils who are unable to attend a general education school due to illness or pathology are given an opportunity to study at an in-patient health care facility or at home.

The general curriculum framework is a document governing the content of national level education, which helps to pursue the goals of primary education, basic education and secondary education. General education curricula and vocational training programmes, if necessary, shall be adapted to learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs may complete formal education programmes within a period of time shorter or longer than the period of time set for such programmes, and they have a possibility to be educated until the age of 21. Learners with special educational needs may study in general education schools' general classes or special classes designated for learners with special educational needs; or in special schools. The teaching methods, syllabus content, teaching plan and organisation of evaluation of pupils' attainments and progression and also procedures for their performance evaluation may be adapted to fit the pupils' special educational needs. Special educational support (special training) for pupils educated by way of complete integration (in general classes) is provided during lessons and training in speech therapy is provided after lessons.

Teacher training is described in the *Regulations on Teacher Training*. There are various forms of study programmes. Each year, some funding from the Ministry for initial teacher education programmes is allocated to special needs education. Every teacher, including teachers who work in vocational or supplementary informal education, must complete at least 60 hours of training in special needs education and psychology. However, in the TALIS 2018 survey, when assessing their readiness to work in the classroom with students of various abilities, only about half of Lithuanian teachers rated it as good or very good, and one-fifth rated it poorly; to educate students in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment, slightly more than a third felt that they were well or very well prepared, while more than a third of our country's teachers felt that they were poorly prepared. About a third of Lithuanian teachers, 34.1 per cent (OECD – 31.2%), were stressed by adapting lessons to students with special educational needs ([TALIS, 2018, Figure 1.5.6](#)).

Three types of guidance at times of transition between phases of education and adult life are available:

- Academic guidance. This can be provided by a subject teacher and/or a special needs education specialist.
- Career guidance. Career guidance is provided in most educational institutions (general education schools, vocational training and other educational institutions, career guidance centres and other). Career guidance is carried out by schools and vocational information points set up in them. Vocational information is provided by the following specialists: vocational information consultants (professional advisors, social educators and school psychologists), social teachers, vocational teachers, general education school teachers and form teachers.



- Psychological counselling. Psychological assistance to a learner who experiences personal and learning problems is universally rendered by assistance providers who work in close co-operation with the learner's parents (foster parents or guardians) and teachers, and provide consultations to them. Quite often, a school psychologist provides pupils with career guidance as well, if the psychologist has a necessary certificate and competence for that.

The main problems and challenges are related to:

- the insufficient educational assistance provision to learners with special educational needs, as there is a lack of special pedagogues and other educational assistance specialists at schools (in 2021, 7.7 per cent of schools had no educational assistance specialist);
- lack of competences among teachers to work with learners with special educational needs;
- a lack of accessibility in schools for children with disabilities (in 2021, only seven, i.e. 0.7 per cent, of schools were fully adapted for students with disabilities).

The lack of educational assistance specialists in public educational institutions is mostly caused by the situation that the salary of specialists working in state or municipal educational institutions is not sufficient to compete with the salary offered in other sectors of the country's economy or private practice. Specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, special pedagogues), whose great need is felt in educational institutions, after completing their studies often choose individual activities or the private sector, where the working conditions and salary are more attractive.

In most cases, schools in small municipalities do not have educational assistance specialists, as it is difficult to offer them a full-time workload due to the small number of pupils. In this case, pedagogical–psychological services come to the aid of schools, which, in addition to their other functions, provide psychological, social pedagogical, special pedagogical assistance in educational institutions where there are no educational assistance specialists. However, their capacity to provide as much help as is needed is insufficient in individual municipalities.

To encourage the inclusion of students with special educational needs (especially due to disability) in vocational training programmes and education supplementing formal education programmes, as well as to increase the quality of education, requirements and qualifications of pedagogues working under these programmes have been tightened; for instance, from 2019, pedagogues must have attended at least 60 hours of courses on the topic of education and inclusion of students with special educational needs. However, due to decentralised qualification improvement, the quality of the implementation of these qualification improvement programmes is not guaranteed. This means that as teachers and educators do not recognise the educational needs of students, or do not have the competence to meet them alone while working in a classroom, the needs are ignored and the same educational, communication, assessment methods and tools are applied to all learners. The data of the research carried out at the initiative of the National Education Agency in 2018 show that teachers experience difficulties and most want to improve their competences in educating children with special educational needs, to carry out assessment and self-evaluation of pupils' personal progress, to individualise and



differentiate the educational content, aiming for inter-disciplinary integration and using ICT in the educational process. Also, the teachers often work alone, although international practice confirms that when working with learners with special educational needs in joint groups, classrooms require team work – e.g. two to three teachers, educational assistance specialist, learner’s assistant(s). However, the situation is improving: the number of teacher’s assistants has doubled from 1,783 assistants in 2018 to 3,415 assistants in 2021 (source: [Education management information system](#) and [Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#), Figure 19.4, p. 107).

Most schools are still not fully adapted for students with disabilities, but efforts are being made. In January 2020, a memorandum was signed on the adaptation of educational and health care institutions for people with disabilities. The parties that signed it are the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Health, the Association of Municipalities, and the Forum of Lithuanian Disability Organisations. The memorandum aims to ensure that the municipalities, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Health, will concentrate their efforts and commit to adapting at least one general education school for children with disabilities in the municipality every year.



SECTION 4. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

This section provides information on aspects of governance across and between different system levels, bodies and stakeholders in the country.

4.1 Shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

Source: [Eurydice](#)

The Lithuanian education system can be called decentralised as it gives some autonomy to schools and local authorities.

The directions of education policy are set at the national level. The Government, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and other ministries participate in the formation and implementation of national education policy. The Government prepares the national education strategy and may submit drafts of laws to the Seimas (the parliament). It also approves development programmes in a specific area or in several areas, as well as legal acts that implement the laws.

The Government prepares the drafts of the state and municipality budgets which includes all public funds for education. The Government also establishes state colleges.

At the national level, education is organised through laws and general procedures describing the principles and criteria for organising education.

Education curricula descriptions, subject curricula and general teaching plans are all set at the national level. The school develops its own curriculum but it can only depart from a nationally designated curriculum in certain cases. More information is provided about this in the sections on teaching and learning at a particular stage of education.

The municipality (local level), based on the directions of national education, forms its own educational strategy lasting several years, which takes into account the needs of the community, the municipality and the region. The municipality also sets tasks and measures to achieve the goals set in the strategy.

Municipal institutions (representative and/or executive) implement the national education policy in the municipality.

In accordance with the [Law on Local Self-Government](#), autonomous functions of the municipality are: the organisation and co-ordination of the provision of educational assistance to the pupil, teacher, family, school, and the implementation of minimum care measures for the child; organisation of free transportation to schools and home for pupils of general education schools living in rural residential areas; organisation of pre-school education, non-formal education of children and adults, organisation of employment of children and youth.



4.2 Specific areas for shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

Source: [FPIES Country report](#) for Lithuania

Source: [GEM country report](#)

Source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 68

Source: [Law on Education](#)

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

According to the *Law on Education*, Article 55, the Government shall:

- implement the laws, decrees of the President and resolutions of the Seimas regulating education, long-term state education programmes, the Government Programme in the field of education, and approve its implementation programmes;
- co-ordinate the activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, other ministries and government agencies on the issues of education;
- found, re-organise, liquidate and re-structure state colleges, educational institutions where the legal form of which is a public establishment, when necessary – education management entities – government agencies, found institutions under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and assign to this Ministry the exercising of the rights and duties of the owner of the institution under the Ministry (with the exception of the adoption of decisions on re-organisation and liquidation of such institutions);
- charge its subordinate executive bodies with the task of drafting of the National Education Strategy and be responsible for its implementation as well as for the implementation of the Government Programme in the field of education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, according to Article 56, shall:

- be empowered to participate in the shaping, implementation and ensuring of the state education policy;
- bear responsibility for education quality;
- submit proposals and draft resolutions to the Government regarding preparation and improvement of laws and other legal acts, funding of education, material base of schools, and disposal of the property of schools;
- manage the Register of Studies, Training Programmes and Qualifications, to establish and manage departmental registers and state information systems as well as to manage personal data administered in state information systems;
- co-ordinate activities of education departments of municipal administrations in the implementation of the state education policy, and submit their general regulations for Government approval;



- set qualification requirements for heads and specialists of education departments of municipal administrations;
- co-ordinate the development of a network of vocational training schools and general education schools designated for learners with special educational needs within the country (region);
- organise and co-ordinate accreditation of general education curricula;
- in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Government, issue licences to execute formal vocational training programmes;
- organise and co-ordinate the dissemination of information about vocational training schools and their vocational training programmes with a view of increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training;
- maintain contacts with appropriate institutions of foreign countries and international organisations to promote independent co-operation of the country's schools and organisations with respective schools and organisations of other countries, to provide funding or otherwise encourage activities of Lithuanians residing abroad in the areas of education and studies, to represent the Republic of Lithuania in foreign countries or at international organisations;
- organise the performance review of teachers and educational assistance specialists in schools in which the Ministry exercises, in accordance with the procedure laid down by legal acts the rights and duties of the state as the owner or stakeholder;
- approve criteria for:
 - pre-school education curricula, a general pre-primary education curriculum, general education, teaching content of formal education (descriptions of primary, basic, secondary curricula, teaching plans) approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport;
 - accreditation of secondary education curricula and the description of implementation of the procedure thereof;
 - general non-formal education programmes of the teaching supplementing formal education, funded from state or municipal budgets, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport;
- approve the description of the procedure of consecutive learning in accordance with general education curricula, and the description of the procedure of pre-school education;
- approve the regulations of in-service training and performance evaluation of heads, deputy heads responsible for education, chiefs of teaching organising divisions of state and municipal schools educational institutions (except higher education institutions), the regulations of in-service training and performance review of teachers, specialists providing assistance to learners, the regulation for training of pedagogues, the regulation of the reserve pool of the heads;
- take care of the teaching of the Lithuanian language and teaching in the Lithuanian language in foreign countries;



- analyse whether the use of state budget allocations to education is appropriate, to report to the public on the general state of education in the country and perform other functions prescribed by the laws and the Government;
- appropriate by tender, budget allocations for establishments, enterprises and organisations carrying out education, research, culture and sports programmes and projects;
- prepare recommendations on the implementation of prevention of violence at schools.

According to the *Law on Education* (Article 58), a representative institution of the municipality shall:

- implement the state education policy, and set out long-term objectives of education development as well as measures for the achievement thereof;
- found, re-organise and liquidate education subdivisions of the municipal administration;
- develop a network of schools carrying out pre-school, pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary education curricula, and children's and adults' non-formal education programmes;
- create conditions for the implementation of compulsory education of children and shall independently develop a network of non-formal education providers.

A municipal executive body shall:

- analyse the state of education, ensure the fulfilment of the state education policy, and organise pre-school education, pre-primary education, general education, children's non-formal education, non-formal adult education;
- organise and co-ordinate the provision of educational assistance to learners, teachers, family, schools, and the implementation of minimum supervision measures of a child;
- in accordance with the procedure laid down by legal acts, appoint heads and specialists of education subdivisions of the municipal administration;
- in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, execute performance review of principals, deputy principals responsible for education, and chiefs of teaching organising divisions;
- organise performance review of teachers and specialists in educational assistance in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport;
- in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Government, organise and keep an accounting of children living within the municipality;
- ensure that all children study according to compulsory education programmes;
- organise testing of learning achievements of learners attending schools located within the municipality;



- in accordance with the procedure laid down by laws, be responsible that every learner residing within its territory is transported to and from school, organise free-of-charge transportation of learners to schools in compliance with paragraph 1 and 2 of Article 36 of this Law;
- provide information to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the public about the state of education in the municipality.

Identification of needs/referral for services

Local Pedagogical psychological service/Educational support service ensure accessibility of provision at the municipal level. Pedagogical psychological service/Educational support service assesses the child's learning difficulties, educational, psychological and learning problems, special educational needs, maturity of the child's school, provides recommendations to schools regarding adaptation/individualisation of curricula, and determines the needs for the provision of educational assistance. It provides information and counselling to parents, schools, and the educational staff, and psychological, social, pedagogical, and special pedagogical assistance to schools that do not have education assistance professionals. The services:

- offer consultation for children with psychological problems (behavioural, emotional problems, relationship with peers, parents, teachers, etc.);
- implement programmes and projects on the prevention of violence, bullying, drug abuse, suicides;
- organise training courses, seminars, lectures for teachers, school specialists, parents on child psycho-emotional development, education;
- provide special educational materials for children with special educational needs, and technical aids for education at school.

A municipality in the territory of which learners with special educational needs reside, shall take care of the accessibility of such learners to education. The Lithuanian Educational Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Lithuanian Training Centre for the Blind and Visually Impaired carry out students' special educational needs assessments.

Providers – Pedagogical psychological service /Educational support service, municipality Child welfare commission, the Lithuanian Training Centre for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Lithuanian Educational Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

At the national level, the National Education Agency has a Pupil's Special Educational Needs Assessment Appeals Commission, which examines appeals when parents (guardians/caregivers) disagree with the conclusions of the municipal pedagogical psychological service or the Educational Assistance Service regarding the pupil's special educational needs (except those resulting from exceptional talents) in pedagogical, psychological, medical and social pedagogical aspects.

Data collection and sharing

The municipalities and the schools provide the data to the register of the students.



Monitoring and evaluation

Source: [FPIES Country report](#) for Lithuania

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and its authorised institutions are responsible for national-level education and science monitoring.

The monitoring is carried out by the National Agency for Education, which is responsible for the management of the Educational Management Information System (EMIS), and by other authorised bodies, but is mostly based on performance monitoring and not funding.

Monitoring of resource use is performed via EMIS, municipal reports on the status of education are produced by the Education Quality and Regional Policy Department at the Ministry in addition to national statistics.

The National Agency for Education manages the register in which all learners are registered. The register provides information on effective education system management and accounting at national and local levels. Schools place their performance and expenditure reports on their respective webpages, and are held accountable to school and local communities in the annual accounting meeting.

At the local level, municipality education bodies monitor general education for children, young people and adults, vocational training, the education of learners with special needs, pre-primary education, non-formal education, the provision of educational assistance, child and youth engagement and the implementation of children's minimum care measures.

Under the *Law on Education*, the external evaluation of a school (except for higher education institutions and vocational training institutions) is carried out periodically. It is initiated by the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the school owner (state schools – budgetary institutions), the executive institution of the municipality (municipal schools – budgetary institutions), the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner (meeting of participants) (state and municipal schools – public institutions), owner (meeting of participants) (other schools).

Education remains a priority area for the [National Audit Office of Lithuania](#), which regularly conducts audits of education system quality. The last audit performed was 'Do the Changes in the Education Determine Pupils' Better Learning Outcomes?' (2020). The implementation of the audit recommendations at the national level would improve the quality of education and pupils' learning outcomes, reduce the achievement gap between urban and rural areas, reduce social exclusion in the long run, increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, and ensure transparent and fair remuneration.

Quality assurance and accountability

Under the *Law on Education*, the quality of education is the responsibility of the education provider and the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner. The state ensures the quality of formal education.

In order to improve the quality of education, educational monitoring, research, self-evaluation and external evaluation of school activities, certification of teachers and educational support specialists, and evaluation of learning achievements are carried out.;



the heads of the educational institution submit an annual activity report to the school community and the council for consideration.

In carrying out the functions assigned by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, in accordance with the *Law on Education* of the Republic of Lithuania and implementing the 'Methodology for quality assurance of the activities of non-formal children's education and its providers' – which includes monitoring, self-evaluation of activities and external evaluation and research – the Centre for Non-Formal Education of Lithuanian Students:

- analyses and systematises data on the self-evaluation and external assessment of the activities of non-formal children's education and schools of supplementary education to formal education, and other non-formal children's education providers;
- conducts the analysis of non-formal children's education monitoring indicators and other studies of non-formal children's education;
- organises non-formal children's education quality and monitoring events.

Schools can regularly perform self-assessment, based on the [methodology](#) of self-assessment of the performance quality of the School implementing general education programmes (2016). The results of the self-assessment of the quality of the school's performance are a way for the school to determine the state of the current performance, to see and analyse the school's progress and its trends, and to predict and plan a strategy for progress. By annually submitting aggregated self-evaluation data to the National Education Agency and announcing the school's progress, schools contribute to the implementation of the goals (goal 2) and performance indicators (goal 2 indicator 16) of the State Education Strategy 2013–2022 (2013).

The external assessment is organised and the schools for assessment are selected by the National Agency for Education. External assessment of the quality of school activities is a formative assessment of the processes taking place in the school, which provides information for adjusting the school's activities and improving its results. External evaluation is based on self-evaluation carried out by the school.

External evaluation can be:

- overall, when all school activities are assessed;
- thematic, when the school's activities are evaluated, delving into the relevant topic (problem, question) determined by the Minister of Education and Science;
- of risks, when the identification and analysis of the risk factors of the school's activities and the prediction of opportunities for improving the activities are carried out.

The *overall evaluation* is carried out using an approved system of 25 indicators covering four areas of school performance – results, education and pupils' experience, educational environments, and leadership and management.

The indicators determined during the *thematic evaluation* can be restructured taking into account the problematic issue identified by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport. Three areas of school performance are analysed: outcomes, education, and pupils'



experience, leadership and management. In 2021, the National Education Agency carried out the first external evaluation of inclusive education in 30 schools to improve the design of measures for effective inclusive education in mainstream schools (source: [Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

During the *risk assessment*, the indicators of the three areas of school activity (results, pupils' support, educational process) are analysed. Leadership and management is not singled out as a separate area, but it is very important (as contextual information) in analysing any school performance data, identifying the significant factors leading to better pupil progress and achievement.

One year after the risk assessment, the data obtained on the change in the quality of the school's activities and the results of the school manager's performance assessment are analysed. After two years, a re-evaluation is organised. A positive change in the school's performance is established if more than half of the indicators are evaluated at a higher level during the re-evaluation.

During school evaluation, the main focus is on monitoring the educational process (at least 75 per cent of the evaluators' working time at school is devoted to this).

Observations are recorded:

1. during overall and thematic evaluation – in the educational activity (lesson) monitoring form;
2. during the risk assessment – in the monitoring form of the school's external risk assessment educational activity (lesson).

After the observed lesson, the teacher is told at least three strong aspects of the lesson and no more than two aspects that could be improved.

The school informs the students and their parents about the findings of the external evaluation. After the evaluation, the school and its founder take care of the improvement of the activities; consultants are used for the improvement of the activities. The National Education Agency, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, monitors and analyses the progress of schools and the impact of aid provided to schools after external evaluation.

Funding

The state funds education from the state budget. This is a purposive state subsidy – a basket, part of which is directly allocated to the school, and municipalities receive a smaller part for further reallocation. Additionally, through differed programmes, the state can allocate investment funds for the development of education.

Municipalities' investment funds for the development of education are allocated in accordance with the programmes specified in the budgets approved by local government councils.

The municipalities also provide schools with school maintenance funds. These funds are used to pay the salaries of service staff and to cover the operating costs of the school, such as heating, electricity and stationery supplies.



Municipalities are responsible for organising all necessary assistance for disabled children and children with special educational needs to enable them to participate in integrated education. This assistance includes transport, equipment, tutoring in the classroom, and all the necessary learning support specialists. Nevertheless, many municipalities have not yet arranged for proper access to schools, or educational services for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

4.3 Formal and informal collaboration across ministries

[The Law on Education](#) states:

Article 57. Powers of ministries, state institutions accountable to the Seimas and government agencies in the field of education management

1. Ministries and government agencies shall:

- participate in working groups for the drafting of documents that regulate educational policy and schools' activities, submit proposals to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport concerning draft legal acts;
- together with the Minister of Education, Science and Sport issue education-related legal acts;
- carry out – according to the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport – the assessment of annual activity reports of the heads of those educational institutions in which they exercise the rights and duties of the state as the owner or stakeholder in accordance with the procedure laid down by legal acts;
- organise – in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport – the performance review of teachers and specialists in educational assistance at schools in which they exercise, in accordance with the procedure laid down by legal acts the rights and duties of the state as the owner or stakeholder;

2. The Government shall establish particular competences and responsibilities in education management issues of ministries and government agencies.

3. State institutions accountable to the Seimas shall, in accordance with their competence, submit conclusions and proposals to the Seimas and the Government concerning draft laws and other legal acts in the area of education.

More concretely the *Law on Education* specifies:

Article 22. Health care in schools

‘The procedure for organising public health care in schools (with the exception of higher education institutions) shall be defined by the Minister of Health together with the Minister of Education, Science and Sport. Schools may implement only those learners’ health promotion programmes which are approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, other ministries or municipal institutions’.



Article 23. Assistance to the school and the teacher

‘At a municipality, the co-ordination of co-ordinately rendered educational assistance, social and health care services to children from their birth until they reach 18 years of age (for those having major and severe special educational needs – until they reach 21 years of age) and to their parents (guardians/caregivers) shall be guaranteed. A civil servant of the municipal administration who is a co-ordinator of inter-institutional co-operation and the qualification requirements shall be established by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport together with the Minister of Social Security and Labour and the Minister of Health’.

‘Carry out the supervision of accessibility and quality of co-ordinately rendered educational assistance, social and health care services in compliance with the monitoring indicators and arrangements of accessibility and quality of the co-ordinately rendered educational assistance, social and health care services as set out by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport together with the Minister of Social Security and Labour and the Minister of Health’.

Article 26. Provision of information about education

Version valid as of 1 October 2018:

Vocational information and vocational guidance services shall include provision of information about opportunities afforded by vocational training programmes, higher education study programmes, possible studying abroad, employment prospects in the labour market of Lithuania, as well as consulting. These services shall be provided in schools, information centres, consulting services and the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in compliance with requirements laid down by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport and the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

Article 35. Accessibility of Education to Persons with Limited Mobility

Children who are unable to attend a general education school due to an illness or a pathological condition shall be provided the opportunity to study at home, to study independently and to pass examinations, or, upon the doctor’s consent, to study at an inpatient personal health care institution starting from the second day of arrival to the said institution. The procedure for organising the teaching of learners at inpatient personal health care institutions and at home shall be laid down by the Minister of Education and Science, upon co-ordination with the Minister of Health.

Article 40. Material Provision of Education and Learning Workload

The Minister of Education and Science shall approve the description of the procedure for evaluating the conformity of textbooks of general education subjects and teaching aids with legal acts, and supplying such textbooks and teaching aids; the Minister of Education, Science and Sport shall, according to the established procedure, collaborate in drafting school hygiene norms confirmed by the Minister of Health.



4.4 Specific mechanisms for formal and informal collaboration that impact on inclusive education

Development of a shared vision for inclusive education

Agreement on National Education Policy (2021–2030) by political parties represented in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, together with the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania and the National Education Council.

'[By the end of 2023](#), to pilot and roll out inclusive education measures in at least five municipalities of different type and their schools, and to consistently expand the network of schools practising inclusive education. To develop the system of education assistance across education establishments so that the number of children per one education assistance specialist does not exceed the requirement.'

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and other state institutions adopt other legal acts. An institutionalised regional level and regional legislation were no longer in place when, in 2010, counties were abolished. The local level is the municipality and the school. Their role and functions are described in sections of the [Law on Education](#), and the [Law on Local Self-Governance](#) establishes the authority of municipal institutions in the field of education.

Identification of needs/referral for services

The description of the procedure for identifying groups of students with special educational needs and dividing their special educational needs into levels is approved by three ministers: the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Social Security and Labour. This description identifies special educational needs.

The National Agency for Education is the educational assistance institution founded by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Science. A budgetary institution, the National Agency for Education was established in 2019 by merging the former Education Development Centre, National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology, Education Supply Centre of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, National Examination Centre, Centre of Information Technologies in Education, and the National Agency for School Evaluation. The National Education Agency, as an educational assistance institution, contributes to ensuring the quality of education, shaping the content of education and co-ordinating its implementation, organising student achievement tests, conducting educational research, and providing comprehensive support to the education system.

Data collection and sharing

Since 2010, the student register has collected data on children's special needs and disability. From 2019, data on disability are also received from the information system of the Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Type of support and amounts received are received from the



Information system for social assistance for families, established by the agreement between the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and all municipalities.

All this data is processed in the Education Management Information System and statistics are provided.

Article 33 of the *Law on Education* obliges state and municipal institutions and agencies – on the basis of the data of the registers recording residents, as well as of other state and departmental registers – to determine the number of children not attending school and their educational needs, and together with schools, implement target programmes for the inclusion of these children in education activity.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport manages the Information system of children who are not learning or not attending school (NEMIS). The municipal executive body, in order to ensure that children learn through compulsory education programmes, appoints a unit of the municipal administration responsible for organising and maintaining children's accounts. Children's accountants organise and co-ordinate the collection and management of data on children who are not learning or not attending school, determination of the actual place of residence of children and reasons for them not attending education. If necessary, children's accountants collaborate with other municipalities, NGOs and other institutions. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to provide the data for NEMIS.

Monitoring and evaluation

The National Agency for Education and the external evaluators it selects perform the external evaluation of the quality of performance in schools providing general education.

A monitoring system is one of the main issues raised at policy level with regard to the quality of ECEC services. In 2021, there were created: [Methodology for self-assessment](#) of the quality of activities of schools implementing pre-school and/or pre-school education programmes, and the [Methodology of external evaluation](#) of the quality of activities of schools implementing pre-school and/or pre-school education programmes.

[STRATA](#) – expert institution. Its general function is to provide the Government and all ministries and municipalities with support regarding evidence-informed policy making, including advice, methodological guidance and support, analytical support (e.g. analytical support to individual ministries as required), and the quality assurance of *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations. It also offers support in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of high-level planning documents (e.g. State Progress Strategy, National Progress Plan). It provides all ministries with the information needed for evidence-informed decision making in the areas of education, science, innovation and human resource policies. Other functions that STRATA provide include giving strategic advice, collecting data from other primary sources for analysis, performing research and evaluation, partially collecting its own primary data as part of specific surveys, and distributing data and analysis to individual ministries.



Quality assurance and accountability

According to the *Law on Education*, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is primarily responsible for the quality of education. It submits to the Government drafts of amendments to the laws, other legal acts and financing for education.

The National Agency for Education supports and analyses initiatives produced by stakeholders in education, co-ordinates and/or implements projects intended to improve performance quality of educational institutions and other education providers (source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 44).

Funding

Methodology for planning the need for state budget funds for free school meals and their distribution; the descriptions of the procedure for providing data on the need for state budget funds for social support for students, and data on the provided social support for students are prepared and approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour (see [2023 summary](#)).

Social support for pupils is financed from the state budget's special targeted grants to municipal budgets, general appropriations allocated in the state budget to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, funds from municipal budgets, funds allocated by the founders of non-state schools and other funds received in accordance with the law.

Free meals in schools are financed from general appropriations allocated in the state budget to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. In the municipalities' schools, targeted funds from the state budget are allocated for the free meals of students, which are used only for the purchase of food products (including goods value added tax). The administration of free meals provision is funded from the municipality's budget.

According to the Article 14 of the [Law on Social support for learners](#), school founders provide the Ministry of Social Security and Labour with data on social support provided to learners, following the procedure for providing data on social support provided to learners approved by the Government or its authorised institution, and, if necessary, other information.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system governance for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the impact of levels of decentralisation/centralisation in the country on inclusive education in practice.

The Lithuanian education system is decentralised or at least partially decentralised. The directions of education policy are set at the national level. Municipal institutions (representative and/or executive) share responsibility by implementing the national education policy in the municipality.

The monitoring is carried out by the National Agency for Education, which is responsible for the management of Educational Management Information System (EMIS), and by



other authorised bodies, but is mostly based on performance monitoring. The Centre for Non-Formal Education of Lithuanian Students analyses and systematises data on the self-evaluation and external assessment of the activities of non-formal children's education.

There are two forms of school assessment taking place: external assessment and self-assessment of the quality of the processes taking place at school. The National Education Agency, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, monitors and analyses the progress of schools and the impact of aid provided to schools after external evaluation.

In 2021, the National Education Agency carried out the first external evaluation of inclusive education in 30 schools to improve the design of measures for effective inclusive education in mainstream schools. One of the findings of the evaluation is that teaching practices are not adapted. The Millennium School programme will help achieve this objective by providing funding to improve the physical environment of schools in line with the principles of universal design, and by strengthening teachers' skills in working with pupils with special needs. In 2021–2027, Lithuania plans to strengthen the provision of educational assistance by setting up regional advisory centres. The purpose is to provide schools and parents with guidance to better assess educational needs and to adapt didactics in the whole territory ([Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

The state funds education from the state budget. Additionally, through differed programmes, the state can allocate investment funds for the development of education. Municipalities' investment funds for the development of education are allocated in accordance with the programmes specified in the budgets approved by local government councils. The municipalities also provide schools with school maintenance funds.

The Co-ordinator of inter-institutional co-operation is an important institution. It helps to carry out the supervision of accessibility and quality of co-ordinately rendered educational assistance, social and health care services in compliance with the monitoring indicators, as well as arrangements of accessibility and quality of the co-ordinately rendered educational assistance, social and health care services as set out by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, together with the Minister of Social Security and Labour, and the Minister of Health.

Collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the other ministries is relatively limited.



SECTION 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This section provides information on the general and specific quality assurance and accountability frameworks and mechanisms informing the country's education system.

5.1 School inspection processes and structures for all forms of educational provision

Sources: [National Agency for Education](#)

Sources: [FPIES country report](#) for Lithuania

Sources: [Eurydice](#)

National Agency for Education (Agency) is an educational assistance institution founded by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. It is tasked to take part in the implementation of the state pre-school, pre-primary and general education policies, and induce education institutions (except for higher education institutions) and other education providers to ensure quality of education. It is an institution operating at the national level, preparing national evaluators for the evaluation of schools throughout Lithuania.

Among other responsibilities of the Agency, it conducts monitoring and evaluation of compliance with the set requirements for quality of activities carried out by education institutions, practical activities and competences of the pedagogical staff, instructional aids and technological solutions, and provides methodical counselling assistance.

National Agency for Education organises and carries out the external evaluation of the performance of schools carrying out a general education curriculum and formal vocational training programmes, organises evaluation of the performance of institutions providing qualification improvement for teachers and specialists providing educational assistance; makes selection of evaluators, provides their training and/or carries out evaluation of their performance.

The work of the Agency started on 1 September 2019.

At a local level, municipal education departments ensure municipal school supervision, initiate periodic assessments and implement preventative measures. Municipal audit services perform external and performance audits in municipal schools.

Pre-school and pre-primary education

The *municipalities* are responsible for organising the provision of pre-school education.

As there was no procedure for external evaluation of pre-school education institutions at the state level, some municipalities have approved the descriptions of the procedure for evaluation of their non-formal education schools (as well as pre-school and pre-primary education institutions). The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport was committed to establishing a system for the external evaluation of pre-school education institutions by



2022. In 2021, a [Methodology for self-assessment](#) of the quality of activities of schools implementing pre-school and/or pre-school education programmes was created, as well as the [Methodology of external evaluation](#) of the quality of activities of schools implementing pre-school and/or pre-school education programmes.

Municipalities, as institutions implementing the rights and obligations of the owner, organise or (through their internal audit departments) perform audits and thematic inspections of educational institutions.

Schools can carry out a self-evaluation of their activities. The school council chooses the areas of activity for school self-evaluation and also the methodology for conducting it. It analyses the results of the self-evaluation and makes decisions on performance improvement.

General education

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport performs public supervision of general education school activities. Supervision of activities in individual schools is carried out by the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner. If necessary, external evaluators are used.

The external evaluation of a general education school is initiated by the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner. The external evaluation of a general education school is carried out by the National Agency for Education and its external evaluators. Evaluators assess the schools by using a single evaluation system.

External evaluation aims to encourage schools to achieve better-quality education, better student achievement and thus better school development. External evaluation of the school activities' quality is a formative evaluation of the processes taking place in the school. The external evaluation is based on the self-evaluation carried out by the school.

General education schools perform self-evaluation themselves. The self-evaluation is initiated by the school head. The area of self-evaluation of the school's activities and the methodology of performance are chosen by the school council.

The *evaluation process* begins with the school's self-assessment. External evaluators familiarise themselves with the school's self-assessment, then they visit the school and gather information. School evaluation focuses on monitoring the educational process (at least 75% of the evaluators work is at the school). Five evaluation levels are used to evaluate the school's performance. The school communicates the findings of the external evaluation to students and their parents. After the evaluation, the school and its founder take care of the improvement of the activity. Consultants are used for the improvement of the activity.

The National Agency for Education together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport monitor and analyse the schools' progress and the impact of school support following an external evaluation.

Schools are evaluated periodically, at least every seven years.



5.2 Other quality assurance processes for all forms of educational provision

Source: [GEM country report](#), p. 39

[Agreement](#) on National Education Policy (2021–2030) by political parties represented in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *together* with the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, and the National Education Council:

‘To develop, by 2024, a single quality standard for general education accessible to all children, both rural and urban, including foreign Lithuanians and children from ethnic communities and minorities, in response to the challenges of the 21st Century, ensuring essential everyday skills (linguistic, natural science, information technology, financial, cultural and civic literacy), and competencies for complex real-world problems, and fostering values needed to operate in a fast-paced, ever-changing world’.

In accordance with legislation act ‘Qualification Requirements for Teachers and Education Support Specialists (Except Psychologists)’ approved by the order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport (2014; 2019) every teacher must have certain knowledge and understanding and competences to deal with pupils with special educational needs and all vulnerable groups.

5.3 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor outcomes at different system levels

Source: [GEM country report](#), pp. 39–40

Source: [National Agency for Education](#)

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Source: [Reforming the network of teacher education institutions in Lithuania](#), 2020.

Source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 57, p. 60

Source: [Education and Training monitor 2022. Lithuania](#), p. 8

General outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for all learners

National Agency for Education organises and administers evaluation of learning achievements, Matura examinations and other examinations.

Specific outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for learners vulnerable to exclusion

No information.



Outcomes for schools (professional development, staff and personal well-being, etc.)

The National Agency for Education:

- conducts monitoring and evaluation of compliance with the set requirements for quality of activities carried out by education institutions, practical activities and competences of the pedagogical staff, instructional aids and technological solutions, and providing methodical counselling assistance;
- ensures the functioning reserve of school heads, organises and carries out evaluation of competences of candidates to school heads or equivalent evaluation and monitors evaluation of school heads' annual performance;
- participates in the evaluation of practical performance of teachers and educational assistance specialists and/or in their certification; organises certification of psychologists providing assistance to learners.

Outcomes for parents and families (support, participation, family well-being, etc.)

The school community, the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner, and other interested parties are informed about the generalised self-evaluation results and improvement directions of the school activity quality. The school communicates the findings of the external evaluation to students and their parents. The specific data obtained during the self-assessment is confidential and belongs to the school community. The school may provide the information to other people or institutions only with the consent of the school community.

Other(s)

The programme funded by the EU relates to improving the quality of overall education in schools. This programme introduces 'quality baskets' for schools, intended to help them improve the academic achievements of their pupils. This intervention is taking place between 2019 and 2023, and EUR 30,324,200.95 is allocated to the programme. Its aim is to provide support to 270 schools and to achieve the goal of improving pupils' academic achievements in 70 per cent of these schools. The programme includes the evaluation of schools and the provision of improvement plans based on these evaluations, followed by financing being allocated to fulfil the goals, as well as monitoring schools' success.

The XVIII Government of Lithuania introduced a new generation of schools – [Millennium schools](#). These schools are targeted at reducing differences in academic achievements between children learning in schools in rural and city areas. Only those teachers with the highest qualifications will be employed in these schools, and the schools will be provided with all the necessary modern educational infrastructure (e.g. STE(A)M laboratories). The infrastructure and non-formal education activities can be accessed by all children within the school's region, and the school should become a mentorship centre for teachers from surrounding schools and new graduates. 56 of the country's 60 municipalities have expressed their desire to participate in the 'Millennium Schools' programme, which provides opportunities to fully renovate and adapt schools for inclusive education, improve teachers' competencies, and improve the quality of education. The programme promotes networking between municipalities and schools that choose to apply for it. All children from the surrounding region will be able to use the facilities and



courses provided at these schools. The schools admitted to the programme cannot select students and must present a five-year programme to increase school quality and inclusiveness. Monitoring the implementation of the programme and steering the process at central level are key to ensuring that all municipalities are benefiting from the programme ([Education and Training monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

5.4 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor the effectiveness of processes at different system levels

Effectiveness of teaching and learning processes

School activities are assessed in the following areas: results; education, self-education and student experiences; educational environments; leadership and management. During the evaluation, these areas are detailed by topics, which are divided into indicators. School culture is not singled out as a separate area; its aspects are described in the areas that determine the results.

Effectiveness of school management processes

As above.

Effectiveness of teacher professional development processes

Teacher education regulation, adopted in 2018, provided a set of criteria for teacher education centres to be evaluated. All concrete criteria fall under three major categories: quality, eligibility and efficiency.

Under the category of *quality*, criteria are as follows:

1. the centre concentrates the permanent research potential of education sciences and specific subjects (pedagogical specialisation);
2. the centre provides PhD in education sciences;
3. the centre brings together high-level international partners in education science and specific subjects (pedagogical specialisation);
4. the study programmes have been prepared or updated in accordance with the principles of modern didactics, based on the latest national and international educational research;
5. there are opportunities to acquire international experience, the *mobility window* is integrated in initial teacher education study programmes;
6. the centre invests into andragogical and/or pedagogical competencies of teacher trainers.

Under the *eligibility* category criteria are as follows:

1. the centre offers a wide range of study and non-formal education programmes: study programmes that provide teacher qualification; teacher and teacher educator professional competence development programmes; they carry out



national and international projects on teacher professional competence development;

2. the supply of study programmes every four years is based on the national forecast of teacher needs, long-term demographic forecasts, analysis of labour market needs and national and regional development strategies;
3. the centre participates in the development and implementation of Lithuanian education policy: updating the curriculum, improving the educational process, developing a lifelong learning system, developing quality education culture.

Under the *efficiency* category criteria are as follows:

1. the centre and other higher education institutions operating in the region on the basis of co-operation do not duplicate study programmes, except in cases when the higher need for teachers of the respective specialisation is based on data of teacher needs or when higher education institutions offer study programmes with different degrees (bachelor, professional bachelor);
2. the centre, in co-operation with other higher education institutions in the region, makes sustainable use of educational science infrastructures and human resources, which ensure the development of educational sciences and related fields of science, the highest quality of studies and international competitiveness;
3. the plan for the establishment and operation of the centre is based on the available financial resources and co-ordinated with the investment programmes of the country, region and city.

Efficiency and effectiveness of funding mechanisms

The funding scheme assigns additional funding for the education of learners with special educational needs, migrant learners and national minority language learners. However, there is no systematic evaluation of the actual costs (Shewbridge et al., 2016).

[FPIES Country report](#) for Lithuania.

Effectiveness of (vertical) co-operation between stakeholders at different system levels

No information.

Effectiveness of (horizontal) co-operation between ministries and ministerial departments

No information.

5.5 Specific monitoring mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Source: [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, pp. 59–60

The Government has allocated funds provided by the EU that are aligned with general national education plans. The measures directly targeted towards vulnerable children are improving the inclusion of children with special educational needs, and support for socially



vulnerable children (children with special educational needs, children from families at social risk, and children experiencing any kind of social exclusion) studying in vocational schools. The monitoring indicators used to assess measures to support socially vulnerable children in vocational schools with the target value established by 31 December 2023:

- Percentage of socially vulnerable children who have received financial aid to improve their access to vocational education compared to all socially vulnerable children (Target value: 4%)
- Number of people who have attend European Social Fund (ESF) activities on career opportunities (Target value: 400,000)
- Number of socially vulnerable children who have received aid to improve access to education (Target value: 200).

This shows that the support is mostly directed towards improving children’s career opportunities, while individual support for children in need is foreseen as reaching only 200 children across Lithuania.

Variety of indicators used to monitor the inclusion of children with special educational needs (target value established by 31 December 2023):

- Decrease in percentage of children not attending school
- Percentage of children who have received ESF support and have been enrolled in a higher class or graduated from school
- Number of school staff who have attended ESF-funded programmes
- Number of pupils who have received ESF-funded educational support
- Number of children attending STE(A)M activities
- Number of schools receiving ESF-funded educational support.

In the [National Progress Plan for 2021–2030](#), strategic goal 3 is *to increase the inclusiveness and effectiveness of education in order to meet the needs of the individual and society*.

Table 2. Impact indicators related to inclusion for strategic goal 3

Impact indicator	Initial value (year)	To be achieved intermediate (2025) value	Final (2030) value to be achieved
3.2.1. Proportion of pupils receiving educational assistance out of all pupils identified as needing assistance	57.6% (2019–2020)	85%	97%



Impact indicator	Initial value (year)	To be achieved intermediate (2025) value	Final (2030) value to be achieved
3.2.2. Share of pupils who used non-formal education opportunities for children (excluding children participating in pre-school and pre-primary education)	60.3% (2018)	65%	75%
3.2.3. Share of children with special educational needs, excluding the gifted, participating in non-formal education of children	30% (2018–2019)	40%	50%
3.2.4. Share of pupils with disabilities educated in an inclusive manner in general purpose educational institutions	48.6 % (2019)	85%	90%
3.2.6. Proportion of pupils who have never been bullied within two months	48.2 % (2018)	55%	70%
3.3.1. Share of returnees who received help to integrate into the education system (pre-school, pre-primary and general education combined) from those who applied	88.7% (2019)	93%	95%

Source: Appendix 1 to the [National Progress Plan for 2021–2030](#)

The Educational development programme for 2021–2030 is designed to implement the tasks set for National Progress Plan’s goal 3 ‘Increasing the inclusion and effectiveness of education in order to meet the needs of the individual and society’.

Table 3. Outcome indicators for strategic goal 3

Outcome indicator for the progress measure	Progress indicator’s initial value (years)	Value in 2030 year
Share of schools adapted for persons with disabilities (percentage)	0.6 (2021)	20



Outcome indicator for the progress measure	Progress indicator's initial value (years)	Value in 2030 year
Number of pupils per educational assistance specialist in general education schools	18.6 (2020)	12.5
Share of children who received educational assistance for at least three months (percentage)	0 (2021)*	85 (2029)
Number of users of new or modernised educational infrastructure per year	0 (2021)*	1,200 (2029)
Share of persons who gained competence after participating in the training, number	0 (2021)*	80 (2029)
Share of children participating in pre-school education programmes from the age of 3 to the age of compulsory primary education (percentage)	89.6 (2019)	95
Share (percentage) of learners with disabilities educated in an inclusive manner in general purpose educational institutions (general classes)	48.9 (2020–2021)	90
Share (percentage) of pupils who used non-formal education opportunities for children (except children participating in pre-school and pre-primary education)	61.7 (2020)	75

* 2021–2027 Indicator of EU fund investment programme for Lithuania. In order to count the achievements financed with the funds of the 2021–2027 EU fund investment programme for Lithuania, the initial value of the indicator is equal to zero.

5.6 Specific evaluation mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

In 2021, the National Education Agency carried out the first external evaluation of inclusive education in 30 schools to improve the design of measures for effective inclusive education in mainstream schools ([Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#))



5.7 Specific accountability mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

According to the Article 53 of the *Law on Education*, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and other institutions authorised by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, municipal administrations and schools carry out state education monitoring in accordance with the education monitoring indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport and the procedure they establish. Every year, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport publishes [a report on the state of the education system](#) in the country and regions. The report consists of three parts. The first part is devoted to the analysis of the national state of education. The second part presents the results of the thematic analysis; in 2022, the topic of the second part was Inclusive education. The third part is devoted to information about the state of education in each municipality: the extent of education, the socio-economic context, the contribution to education, its processes and the achieved results.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of quality assurance and accountability for inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the implications of how different stakeholders across the education system are accountable for ensuring the effective implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice.

Six strands of policy and practice on school quality assurance can be distinguished:

- self-evaluation by schools;
- external evaluation;
- national qualifications and exams during upper-secondary stages;
- the assessment of students' progress at earlier stages;
- stakeholder engagement (including the involvement of students and their parents in the process of planning and implementing improvements);
- the evaluation of teachers and school leaders ([A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#), p. 73).

The main institution responsible for educational assistance, implementation of the state pre-school, pre-primary and general education policies, monitoring and evaluation of quality of activities carried out by educational institutions, competences of pedagogical staff, carrying external evaluation of performance of schools, organising evaluation of performance of institutions providing qualification improvement for teachers and specialists providing educational assistance, is National Agency for Education.

The main evaluation processes that are taking place are schools' self-evaluation and schools' external evaluation, performed by the National Agency for Education. The general schools are evaluated applying the methodology created in 2016, but pre-school and pre-primary education institutions can be evaluated applying the methodology which has



been just recently created, in 2021. The self-evaluation is initiated by the school head. The external evaluation of a general education school is initiated by the institution implementing the rights and obligations of the owner.

Concerning other quality assurance processes, there are 'Qualification Requirements for Teachers and Education Support Specialists (Except Psychologists)' approved by the order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport (2014; 2019), which require every teacher to have certain knowledge and understanding and competences to deal with pupils with special educational needs and all vulnerable groups. Also, following the [Agreement on National Education Policy \(2021–2030\)](#), it is aimed 'To develop, by 2024, a single quality standard for general education accessible to all children'.

Monitoring of the outcomes at different levels of the education system should be developed further. Currently used are the monitoring of learning outcomes for all learners and external assessments of schools. Also, schools organise self-assessment and share the results with their communities. There are also the programmes, addressed to the improving the quality of schools, such as 'quality baskets', and 'Millennium schools', funded by the EU. The schools and municipalities have to publish progress reports, but not all are doing this. However, if the municipality wants to participate in the Millennium schools' programme, it is obligatory to publish the progress report, and it was the main reason for the breakthrough in publishing progress reports in 2021: 78 per cent of schools and 57 of 60 municipalities published progress reports at the national level ([Lithuania. Education in the country and regions 2022](#), p. 79).

Regarding the evaluation mechanisms, the assessments of school activities and teacher professional development processes are well-developed. However, there is no systematic evaluation of the actual costs; detailed evidence should be gathered regarding costs and the adequacy of funding in general. The effectiveness of vertical and horizontal co-operation between stakeholders and ministries is not evaluated as well.

Concerning monitoring mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education, there are indicators set for monitoring the increase of inclusion in the National Progress Plan for 2021–2030 and in the Educational development programme, managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Also, there are funds provided by the EU that are aligned with general national education plans. The measures directly targeted towards vulnerable children are improving the inclusion of children with special educational needs, and support for socially vulnerable children (children with special educational needs, children from families at social risk, and children experiencing any kind of social exclusion) studying in vocational schools. Also, various indicators are used to monitor the inclusion of children with special educational needs.



SECTION 6. STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION, CO-OPERATION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

This section provides information on the structures, mechanisms and opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and co-operation in the country.

6.1 Does the legislation and policy framework specify learner voices are used to inform the development of learning and teaching environments?

Yes.

6.1a Description of the legislation and policy framework around the use of learner voice

Article 63 of the [Law on Education](#) – Participation of school community members in education management.

1. Members of the school community may participate in education management, and unite into associations, organisations and alliances of various interest groups (learners, students, teachers, parents/guardians/caregivers, schools, education management level heads) that fulfil tasks and functions for education, culture, scientific research development as set out by their members and provided for in their statutes.

The Interdepartmental Child Council under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania is a collegial institution that seeks to improve the co-ordination of the activities of the state and municipal authorities and institutions, their co-operation with non-governmental organisations and the implementation of the legislation in the field of Children Rights Protection. The Council consists of representatives of the Lithuanian School Student Union, municipalities, ministries and non-governmental organisations.

6.2 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities?

No.

6.2a Description of how the legislation and policy framework around curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities

Not applicable.

6.2b Explanation

'School curricula in Lithuania are currently very inflexible, and outdated books and other tools restrict teachers with regard to the provision of information that is more relevant to



the current times', is stated in the [A Deep Dive into the European Child Guarantee in Lithuania](#) – Main report, UNICEF, 2022, p. 71. However, the situation is changing as currently school curricula have been renewed. In 2022, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport approved re-designed 47 curricula of the subjects. The re-designed general curricula follow a competence-oriented direction of education – the student's goal should be not only be to acquire knowledge, but also to be able to apply it, to have more skills needed in the modern world. The aim is to develop cognitive, digital, social, emotional and healthy lifestyle, creativity, civic, cultural and communication competences. The re-designed curricula will be implemented in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and III gymnasium grade from 2023/2024 academic year, and in the remaining grades from 2024/2025 academic year (Source: [Redesigned curricula](#)). The curricula do not aim to address specific differences such as LGBTQ+ community, but some aspects are covered. For example, the curriculum of ethics includes topics related to 'otherness' – differences related to traditions and culture, introduces the principles of tolerance, respect, and the variety of cultures.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Education Development Centre and the National Agency for Education are developing methodological guidance for teachers on how to adapt the general curricula for various types of pupils recognised as having special educational needs. In 2022, the '[Recommendations regarding the adaptation of updated general curricula to the learners with special educational needs](#)' were prepared.

Also, the National Agency for Education in 2022 published the '[Guidelines for the implementation of the principle of inclusion in the school](#)'. The guidelines aim to help schools review the policy of the institution, encourage self-evaluation of the available human and material resources, educational practices, to help analyze and improve the inclusion processes taking place in the school, encourage mutual co-operation, adopt joint agreements, the observance of which will help to overcome the challenges arising in the school in implementing the principle of inclusion.

6.3 Does the legislation and policy framework support the active involvement of different stakeholders in ensuring inclusive learning environments?

Parents and families

In order to promote society's participation in shaping and implementing education policy, the municipal education council and councils for concrete education sphere can be established. The pupils, teachers, parents (foster parents, guardians), social partners, education providers and/or their associations are represented in the municipal education council. Municipality council approves the statute of the municipal education council. Municipal education council analyses how municipality implements national education policy, approves long-term education goals and gathers society to reach these goals.

The school council is the school's highest self-governance body, representing the pupils, teachers, parents (foster parents, guardians) and local community. The school council accounts for its activity to the members of the school community who have elected the school council.



From 1 January 2018 the provision that the school council consists of pupils, teachers, parents (foster parents, guardians) and representatives of the local community came into force. A member of the school council can be a person who has the knowledge and ability to help achieve the school's strategic goals and fulfil the school's mission.

School-leaders/leadership teams, teachers and specialist staff

[New measures](#) were proposed in 2020 within the the EU's [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) (SRSP) project for Lithuania, and aimed at having a comprehensive and coherent system in place for the support and development of school leaders. These include introducing a mentoring system, creating professional networks for school leaders, as well as strengthening the role for universities in the professional development of school leaders.

With the support of the EU's Structural Reform Support Programme, Lithuania has worked to increase school principals' ability to play a pivotal role in improving teaching quality in their schools as part of the on-going reform. The shift to a competence-based curriculum will require changes in teaching practices, for instance, 30% of the curriculum will be at the discretion of teachers, to achieve more enquiry-based learning and support from school leaders and structures of leadership in schools. School principals will have to encourage teachers to take part in specific, and school-based professional development activities on the new curriculum. The project provided Lithuania with recommendations for the curriculum reform to bring about the desired changes, including:

1. identifying future training and development needs of school leaders, teachers and municipal decision-makers;
2. investing in specific formats of professional development, such as school-based coaching, upskilling on digital education, and a Master-level qualification on school and curriculum leadership;
3. further aligning policies on school leadership and teachers' career progression with the curriculum reform.

More information is available from project partners the [British Council](#).

[\(Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania\)](#)

Lithuanian School Student Union (LMS) aims to represent school students by forming Education and Youth policies, educating school students with urgent issues, joining them in common activities by co-operating with governmental and non-governmental institutions, and creating a perfect community for schools and their students.

[Lithuanian School Student Union:](#)

- encourages school students' initiatives, inter-understanding and collaboration;
- represents school students by forming an impact of Youth and an Education policy, as well as by collaborating with governmental and non-governmental institutions;
- unites school students to solve common problems;
- collects, analyses and promotes school student councils' guidelines in Lithuania and abroad;
- develops international relations between school students;



- organises meetings, debates and conferences on relevant topics for students.

Schools are not obliged to collaborate and this is not encouraged in any way; the [research data](#) from 2015–2016 allow us to distinguish a few basic types of school collaboration: with distant schools, with nearby schools, with similar ones and schools that share the same name. Usually schools very actively collaborate with distant schools, i.e. schools that are located in another municipality, the ones which do not need to compete for pupils, teachers, etc. Moreover, schools collaborate more actively with similar ones. The provision of the same programme or the same type of school can be viewed as a similarity. The collaboration often exists between nearby schools which provide different education programmes and teach the same streams of pupils. This makes it possible to further monitor pupil achievement and to improve the educational process on the basis of feedback. Typically, schools which provide an educational programme of a lower level, such as a pro-gymnasium, tend to collaborate with schools which provide an educational programme of a higher level, such as a gymnasium. Schools which are located further from each other collaborate to share best practices. Schools, especially small and/or rural schools, in order to mobilise their available human resources, collaborate by creating committees for pupil achievement evaluation or to deal with unforeseen or crisis situations. They also collaborate in order to save the available material resources, such as transport, through sharing the existing infrastructure for educational purposes. When school autonomy increases, school collaboration is an important factor which strengthens the leadership of principals. When schools collaborate, principals provide support and advice to each other on various issues of school activities. Also, principals share ideas and experiences on how to implement certain changes or innovations.

Stakeholders in the local communities

No information.

Local-level decision-/policy-makers

The European Social Fund project ‘Smart and Learning Children of Kaunas district’ aims to increase the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools in Kaunas.

The 2020–2022 project develops and pilots an innovative model for providing education, social and health services to children of all ages. To support children, a multi-disciplinary team is available, but also workshops, stress management seminars, art and music therapy sessions. The project also aims to develop an interactive platform to provide support and guidance material to professionals and parents ([Education and Training Monitor 2022. Lithuania](#)).

Non-governmental organisations, disabled people’s organisations or other organisations representing vulnerable groups

Non-governmental organisations, disabled people's associations, day care centers provide social/social exclusion-decreasing services. The Autism Association, for example, like association of ‘Lietaus vaikai’ (‘Rain Children’), is a non-profit organisation that unites parents of children with autism spectrum and other developmental disorders, and adults



with autism spectrum disorders. The association 'Kitoks vaikas' ('Other child') takes care of all the necessary information about autism disorder and an effective help method – Applied Behavioral Therapy (ABA). The association unites Lithuanian families whose children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The Association's activities also involve its members as professionals whose mission is to help a child with autism understand the world and learn how to live independently.

According to the [National Network of Education NGOs](#), there is a need for 'opening up' the education system. One of the recommendations for Lithuania by the OECD is to include NGOs in the modelling and provision of public services. Although the 2014–2020 National Progress Programme had an indicator to procure at least 15% of public services from independent entities, including non-governmental organisations, this indicator reached only 2.9% in the field of education in 2019. Lithuania's education system was named as 'very closed, focused on maintaining a network of subordinate institutions, and the involvement of non-profit organisations in education as social partners in both decision-making and service provision is very slow'.

However, it is worth noticing that there are various possibilities for all citizens to participate in the decision-making processes. The state and municipal institutions and bodies, the Government, the Seimas, and the European Commission consult with the public when making decisions. Often, when a work group is created for preparation of the documents, the representatives of an NGO working in the field are included.

Also, citizens have possibilities to participate in the legislative processes from the earliest possible stages, when the open consultations are organised. (Source: [Lithuania My Government website](#))

6.4 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure that curriculum development processes involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

No.

6.4a Description of the legislation and policy framework ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development processes

Not applicable.

6.4b Explanation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport received comments from various organisations after the draft guidelines for general education general curriculum were prepared. Then, after adjusting the project, together with three universities, they organised public consultations to which they invited teachers of various subjects, school principals, parents of students, representatives of higher education institutions, representatives of municipalities, non-governmental organisations and other interested persons. The purpose of the consultations is to present the updated draft of the Guidelines based on the comments received, to discuss the progress of updating the general programmes and to consult with the educational community on the possibilities



of implementing practical changes. Also, subject teachers were invited to submit their suggestions and observations for the current versions of the general curriculum projects by email.

6.5 Does the legislation and policy framework support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas?

Yes.

6.5a Description of the legislation and policy framework that supports the development of learning communities

In the '[Description of the activities of teachers](#) working in the general education, vocational training and non-formal education programmes (except pre-school and pre-primary education programmes) for the school community' the Activities for the school community are defined – part of the teacher's work is aimed at achieving the goals of the school community, carried out in co-operation with other members of the school community, partners or working individually. Some activities are obligatory, like consulting of parents; other co-operation activities aimed at planning and improving school activities, creating a positive school micro-climate, ensuring the quality of education and educational assistance, and ensuring the safety of school-educated pupils, can be agreed with the teacher individually, but the activities for the community are included in the teacher's workload and are paid. These activities help to support the development of the learning communities. For example, teachers can carry out counselling and experience dissemination activities, and co-operation activities with school partners, including the organisation of joint projects and events and their implementation at school or beyond.

The Learning Schools Network (LSN) is a form or system of school co-operation (meetings, seminars, consultations, informal meetings to share experiences, etc.) that helps schools to solve emerging problems and share good practices, and effectively implement innovations. It also helps to create collaborative networks of schools, where school communities with more problem-solving experience help less experienced schools learn how to solve them. This encourages closer communication and co-operation between schools and the dissemination of good practices. The networks were established in 2009, as part of the project 'Networks of Learning Schools', financed from ESF funds.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers how effectively different stakeholders across the education system are supported to increase their personal and collective ability to be inclusive in practice.

In Lithuania there are some opportunities of stakeholder collaboration and co-operation. *Law on Education* indicates that the members of the school community may participate in



education management, and create various interest groups of learners, teachers, parents, schools, or education management level heads.

The pupils, teachers, parents (foster parents, guardians), social partners, education providers and/or their associations are represented in the municipal education council. Municipal education council analyses how the municipality implements national education policy, approves long-term education goals and gathers society to reach these goals. The school council is the school's highest self-governance body, representing the pupils, teachers, parents (foster parents, guardians) and local community.

Lithuanian School Student Union represents school learners by forming an impact of Youth and an Education policy, as well as by collaborating with governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Schools are not obliged to collaborate and this is not encouraged in any way, though they tend to collaborate for various reasons together and with other institutions. There are no reliable statistics collected related to school collaboration.

Concerning curriculum development, discussions are encouraged. General curricula programmes were recently renewed, and there were public consultations organised with teachers of various subjects, school principals, parents of students, representatives of higher education institutions, representatives of municipalities, non-governmental organisations and other interested persons.

Lithuania's education system is slowly involving non-profit organisations as social partners in both decision-making and service provision. However, citizens and interests' groups can participate in the open consultations that take place in the processes of reforms, preparing new laws or amendments, and decisions taken by institutions that affect society or individual groups.