

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Lithuania

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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LITHUANIA

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) the compulsory education age range is 7-16 years.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Pre-school education

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programs:

3–6/7 years of age

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators (*source: UIS*)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	64.4	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	62.6	2003/04
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
0.0	45.8	50.9	60.5 0.3(*)	66.7 13.5(*)	6.0 84.6(**)

UIS estimation. (*) Enrolled in primary education. (**) Primary education enrolment ratio.

Note: In 2004, the number of children of less than 3 years of age in pre-school institutions was 11,592, and the number of children aged 3 or more way 76,831. (Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.)

1.3.3. Teachers, 2003/04:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
11,127	99.6

(...) Not available.

Note: In 2004, the total number of teachers was 11,901 (100% female, of whom 93.1% trained). (Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.)

1.3.4. Funding: Not available

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing: Not available

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Not available

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

In Article 7 Part 3 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania the provision is made that Pre-school education is provided to children from 1 to 5 (or 6) years of age.

In Article 8 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania the following provisions are made:

- The purpose of pre-school education is to help a child to do well across the primary education curriculum.
- Pre-school education starts the same year when the child reaches the age of 6. Pre-school education can be provided earlier at the request of the parents and if the child is mature enough for this type of education, however not earlier than s/he reaches the age of 5. Institutions responsible for the protection of children's rights have the authority to decide whether pre-school education should be compulsory for a certain child.
- A One-year pre-school curriculum is implemented by kindergartens, primary and other schools, licensed freelance teachers or other education providers.
- Families raising pre-school children (aged 5-6 years) at home receive educational assistance according to a procedure established by the Government or its authorised institution.

According to Resolution No. 1170 of 31 August 1995, from September 1995 children in pre-school institutions are charged fees irrespective of the subordination of the institution: the fee amounts to a the determined norm of a child's nourishment per day for each day of attendance in pre-school institutions and is defined by the founders of the institutions in question.

Fees for a child's nourishment per day for each day of attendance in pre-school institutions (excluding non-state institutions) are reduced by 50% if: the child (children) has only one of the parents; there are 3 or more children in the family; the father is involved in active service; the child is growing in a family of pupils or students, where one of the parents is enrolled on a full-time study programme in an educational institution. Additional contributions may be obtained from local administration budgets (municipal–town–and regional councils) and from enterprises, institutions and organizations.

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

Not available

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

Preschools (*lopšelis-darželis, darželis, mokykla-darželis*) fall under the authority of local governments. The fees parents have to pay are established by the founder. With a view to fostering children's school maturity, pre-primary preparatory groups (*priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupės*) are established in kindergartens, kindergarten-schools, and lower and upper secondary schools of general education.

New educational establishments, such as kindergarten-primary schools, have founded in recent years. In 2004, 88,423 children attended pre-school education institutions or in other terms 50.3% of all the children of pre-school age.

Around two thirds of the kindergarten-schools are in urban areas and one third in rural areas. The kindergarten-schools are very unequally distributed, and there are no kindergarten-schools in some municipalities.

Pre-schools include those of general purpose (they may have different approaches: artistic, healthy lifestyle, etc.), special pre-school institutions (for children with special needs) and sanatorium-type establishments for rehabilitation purposes. In addition, there are pre-school training centres for disabled children (up to 12 years of age) run by the State but also supported by different organizations (e.g. charitable institution-community *Viltis–Hope*).

Separate groups in which children of different nationalities are being educated in their mother language at the request of their parents constantly operate in pre-schools. In 2004 the following pre-school education institutions, where children were educated in a language other than the State language, operated: 18, Russian; 13, Polish; mixed (where children are educated in several languages), 48 pre-school education institutions. About 6,500 or 7.2 % of all the children in pre-school education institutions were educated in a language other than the State language.

In 2004 the founders of pre-school education institutions were: municipalities (652 institutions), community (1), private person (1), and joint stock company (1).

The State supports the raising of pre-school aged children at home and provides for compensatory payments. In addition, educational and health care institutions provide methodical, diagnostic and consultative support to families raising pre-school aged children at home.

Pre-school education is also supported by two international projects: "Democratization of Pre-school Education" initiated by the *Open Society Fund-Lithuania* in 1992, and the project "Step by Step" started in 1994. The first project involves sixty-one pre-school establishments and primary school-type kindergartens. A new type of pre-school establishments (childhood pedagogical centres) was founded in 1997. The main goal of these centres is to systematically increase the qualification of pre-school teachers. There are now ~~seven~~ 11 childhood pedagogical centres in Lithuania.

The "Step by Step" project involves twenty-two educational establishments. These institutions follow the programme *Guidelines for pre-school education*, with

emphasis on the principles of humanistic education and with a distinctive methodology employed. Both projects are promoting changes in teacher training institutions.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Directors, Deputy directors, class teachers, pre-primary education teachers, artistic education teachers, special needs education teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, other teaching personnel.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Pre-school and primary teachers are trained at higher education institutions and teacher training colleges. Courses at teacher training colleges last three years (four years for primary teachers when an additional specialization is pursued); studies at higher education institutions lead to a bachelor's degree (four years duration) and a master's degree (one year to eighteen months of study after the bachelor's degree).

At the end of 1997, the teaching staff amounted to 12,200 (practically all women) of whom 91% were graduates of higher education institutions or colleges; 8,100 had a specialization in pre-school education.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Not available

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

Not available

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

Not available

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programs

The general curricula approved by the former Ministry of Culture and Education provide guidelines for pre-school education. They are adapted according to the individual needs of pre-schools. The form of instruction is chosen freely.

Pre-school education is provided in accordance with two state programmes: Guidelines for pre-school education—a curriculum for teachers and parents (1993) and the kindergarten curriculum *Vërinëlis* (The String) of 1993. Both programmes pursue the same goals: to foster, in collaboration with the family, children's self-reliance, positive self-assessment, initiative, and creativity; to help children to acquire positive

life experiences; to support the sound development of mental abilities; to strengthen children's health; to meet children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs; and to create the appropriate conditions for the assimilation of the national cultural background. However, the two programmes differ with regard to methods. The programme based on the Guidelines for pre-school education employs the method of integrated education/integrated upbringing, whereas *The String* is based on a whole-creative/complex-creative method. The methods are different in their approach to the child's free choice of activity, the role of the teacher in the educational process, the school environment and the quality of education. The two programmes, moreover, define the status of the family and the pre-school establishment and outline the possible ways of their co-operation.

The curriculum content of pre-primary education is based on the following principles: development of attitudes based on values, social and cultural orientation, awareness of purpose, accessibility, integrity and continuity. The content of the pre-primary education curriculum is implemented throughout the entire time spent by the child in the pre-primary group: while doing the daily chores, preparing to have an afternoon nap or playing outside, in informal communication with the teacher and the visitors of the group and also participating in spontaneous games or the activities organised by the teacher.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

In the kindergarten programme *Vérinélis* the major goal of children's education in a kindergarten is defined as “to foster, in co-operation with the family, all abilities of the child, especially those which determine the development of his/her individuality and the success of his/her integration into society (socialization)”. The other goals of children's education in kindergarten are:

- to develop most favourable conditions for adopting the basic principles of the nation's spiritual culture (moral, aesthetic, communicative, etc.);
- to protect and strengthen children's physical and mental health, to cherish their natural abilities and satisfy their essential needs for moving, physical and mental security, communication, cognition, self-expression and self-respect;
- to cultivate the mental capacities (intellectual, emotional and relating to will-power) of the children by stimulating the formation of their character and also cherishing their individuality, initiative and creativity.

One aim of pre-primary education is to help the child acquire competencies necessary for everyday life and successful studies at school:

- social competencies necessary to live in a community;
- health care competencies necessary to lead a healthy way of life, move and act safely;
- cognition competencies necessary to explore and discover the world;
- communication competencies necessary to listen, to speak, to try reading and writing to be able to communicate with others and express oneself;
- artistic competencies necessary to imagine, feel, create and admire.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The method of integrated education/integrated upbringing (according to the *Guidelines for pre-school education*) is orientated towards the needs of the child; a natural environment stimulating the child's activity is created, with the teacher only assisting the child in his/her independent activity. The complex-creative / whole-creative method (*Vėrinėlis*) is based on the activity inspired and organized by the teacher as well as on the spontaneous activity of the child, which goes on in separate nooks arranged by the teacher.

Some kindergartens prepare their own programmes which enrich the official programme with subjects for the training in special abilities, e.g. the kindergarten *Dainorėlis* providing training in music, the kindergarten *Etiudas* for the arts, etc. There are also pre-school groups employing the pedagogical approach of M. Montessori and R. Steiner.

Pre-schools do not provide instruction segmented into school days, weeks, terms, lessons. Systematic subject instruction in kindergartens has already been rejected. The curriculum sets forth the goals and modes of activities for each age group, which include physical exercises, games (traditional, creative, mobile and didactic), communicative activities, development of speech, artistic activities (art, drama and music), cognitive-exploration activities and development of working habits.

The various kinds of activities are integrated with a view to the child's developmental peculiarities and its rhythm of life. Every group in the kindergarten has its own rhythm of activity. The group's rhythm is shaped by several factors, such as: 1) the interchange of the children's activity and leisure, 2) the proper proportion between the organised and freely chosen activity, 3) a sufficient time period for a particular activity, 4) the harmony of the activity stimulating the child's physical, psychic and social development, 5) the adjustment of cognitive activity and 6) the appropriate distribution of routine and holidays. The rhythm of the child's individual life is also taken into consideration; he/she is provided with conditions to get involved in activity and have leisure, move and relax, choose the forms of activity, communicate with others or refrain from it.

The base line for the adaptation of the curriculum to the child's needs is the child's competencies and experiences and the compensation for the identified gaps in his/her education. The child's educational needs are identified during her/his first month in a pre-primary group through the observation of his/her everyday activities and analysis of the tasks performed.

The performance of children is not subject to formal assessment. Primary schools admit children aged 6 or 7 years.

The main components are: social and emotional maturity, intellectual maturity and readiness to become a pupil. These elements are considered in relation to the peculiarities of learning processes and the level of concrete achievement. In general, the degree of psychological development is more important than the level of achievement in order to determine if a child is mature for school.

Children who are native speakers of languages other than Lithuanian or children coming from mixed families are taught under special programmes of practical Lithuanian. Special attention is paid to the development of the social skills of children coming from families that belong to the social risk group; such children receive special emotional support and undergo a therapy of play and arts. Stimulating,

corrective or rehabilitative methods are applied in the education of children with special needs.

In schools implementing the pre-school education curriculum, education is carried out within the Core pre-school education curriculum approved by Resolution No 1147 of the Minister of Education and Science on 24 July 2002 and the Standard of pre-primary education, approved by Resolution No ISAK -1015 of the Minister of Education and Science on 9 July 2003.

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

Not available

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Not available

[Main sources: EURYDICE Website, Last updated: 2004. EURYBASE 2001/02. Ministry of Education and Science. *Education in Lithuania. Figures and trends*. Vilnius, 2003.]

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)

[Information not available]

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)		

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available).

Not available

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

The standard of pre-primary education, approved by Resolution No ISAK -1015 of the Minister of Education and Science on 9 July 2003. The criteria for determining the

child's maturity to study according to the pre-primary education and primary education curricula, approved by Resolution No ISAK-2173 of the Minister of Education and Science of Lithuania on 29 October 2005.

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

Not available

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, December 2005.]