

ASSESSING THE NEED FOR EDUCATORS

6 September 2023

No VRE-5

SUMMARY

Relevance of the assessment

There were 41,800 educators in Lithuania in the academic year 2022-2023, of whom 38,500 were teachers. In the academic year 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, the number of pupils per one relative teaching post increased from 11.6 to 12¹, while the EU average in 2020 was 12.3² (e.g. 16.5 in the Netherlands, 12.5 in Estonia). Lithuania was one of the 4 countries with the worst rate, thus it plans the implementation of the Millennium Schools Programme aiming to achieve 12.3 by 2030³.

Lithuania was among the three EU countries with the worst teacher age indicators in 2020. The number of teachers aged 50 and over in general education was 1.5 times the EU average⁴. Working teachers of retirement age (65+) contribute to solving the problem of the shortage of teachers: in pre-primary education, their share was 3.5 times the EU average, and in primary and secondary education – almost 3 times⁵. In 2014–2022, the ratio of younger teachers to teachers aged 50+ decreased from 1.08 to 0.66⁶. According to the indicator, not enough young teachers are entering schools because of the lack of appeal of the teaching profession. Compared to other sectors, education has the highest number of older workers (55+)⁷.

¹ Data from the Education Management Information System. Municipal education monitoring indicators. Online access: <https://www.svis.smm.lt/rodikliai/> (accessed on 30 June 2023).

² Eurostat data. Online access:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDUC_UOE_PERP04_custom_5451626/default/table?lang=en (accessed on 30 June 2023).

³ Education Development Programme 2021-2030.

⁴ Eurostat data. Online access:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDUC_UOE_PERD01_custom_5448862/default/bar?lang=en (accessed on 30 June 2023).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Education Management Information System. Municipal education monitoring indicators. Online access: <https://www.svis.smm.lt/rodikliai/> (accessed on 30 June 2023).

⁷ STRATA (2023). The state of human capital. Centre for Strategic Analysis of the Government.

In order to address the problem of attracting new teachers to schools, the State Strategy for Education 2013 - 2022 foresaw an increase in the share of teachers aged 30-49 from 51.8% to 60% by 2022, but instead of increasing, it dropped to 37%. The Education Development Programme 2021-2030 foresees the achievement of the previously planned enrolment rate of 60% in 2030.

Objective and scope of the assessment

The objective of the assessment is to provide structured information on the identification of the need for teachers and the measures taken to attract and train them.

Key assessment questions:

- ✓ is the need for teachers determined/identified in the country;
- ✓ does the state and municipalities implement measures to attract and train teachers;
- ✓ are different forms of teacher training used.

The object of the assessment is the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

We assessed the information provided by the Ministry and other institutions. We surveyed all municipalities, state and municipal pre-school and general education schools, higher education institutions that train teachers, and 2023 graduates of pedagogical studies. We organised meetings with the Vilnius University Faculty of Philosophy, Vytautas Magnus University Academy of Education, the State Studies Foundation, the Government Strategic Analysis Centre, the Employment Service, the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions, Lithuanian municipalities, associations of the heads of the education departments of Lithuanian municipalities and of schools in Lithuania, and representatives of the programme "I Choose to Teach!".

The period 2020-2022 is assessed. To assess changes, we have used data from the previous year and 2023. Final enrolment data for 2023 by specialisation were not yet available as of 6 September 2023.

The scope of the evaluation and the methods used are described in Annex 2 "Scope and Methods of the Evaluation" (page 51).

Main assessment results

The need for teachers is not adequately assessed, pedagogical studies do not provide sufficient training for teachers, and the effectiveness of the measures taken to train and attract teachers is not assessed.

Identifying the need for teachers at national level

In Lithuania, the need for teachers is determined at different levels, including national, municipal and school levels. The results of needs assessments vary. The forecasts for the demand of the Government Strategic Analysis Centre for 2018 and 2021 were incomplete due to a lack of data on specialisations of education students and the current demand for

educators, the failure to take into account all the influencing factors such as the restructuring of the education network, the declining number of children, and the failure to assess the need for psychologists and non-teaching assistants, which can have an impact on the demand for educators. The results of the projections are not relevant for determining the number of state-funded study places, as there is no limit to the number of places in 2023 and the priority specialisations identified do not cover all the scarcest ones (Subsection 1.1, page 11 and Subsection 1.2, page 13).

Municipalities and respondent state and municipal schools anticipate a higher-than-nationally projected need for pre-primary, special, social, English, Mathematics, Physics and other teachers, as well as psychologists and teaching assistants in 2024-2025. 51% of all schools anticipate a shortage of 1 389 educator posts in the 2023-2024 academic year, including 445 for social and special educators. Non-priority specialisations, such as pre-primary, pre-school and English, have a projected shortage of 590 educator posts. The city of Vilnius accounts for 31% of the total projected demand for educators in the country (Subsection 1.2, page 13).

Schools do not register all vacancies for educators on the Educator Demand Monitoring Platform and the Employment Service: 28% of responding schools register them on the platform and 57% on the Employment Service. There was a mismatch between the vacancies registered with the Employment Service and the specialisations of the educators looking for employment: the majority of job seekers were teachers of Physical Education and Music, while the biggest shortage was of teachers of English and Lithuanian, Mathematics, special education and other subjects (Subsection 1.3, page 17 and Subsection 1.4, page 20).

Since the Ministry makes decisions in the absence of detailed national forecasts of the need for teachers and priority pedagogical specialisations do not include all the most positions of educators that are the scarcest, the preparation of all the necessary educators and their need is not ensured. Responsible registration of teacher vacancies and assessment of their need, taking into account all influencing factors, would help to make informed decisions on ensuring the demand (Section 1, page 11).

Implementation of measures to attract teachers

For 10 years, Lithuania has been striving to strengthen the attractiveness and prestige of the teaching profession. Measures to attract and train teachers have been implemented at state and municipal level, but not enough new teachers are entering schools. Municipalities and respondent schools indicated the following important reasons for the shortage of teachers: low prestige of the teaching profession - 75% of municipalities, 60% of pre-school education and 66% of general education schools; difficult relations with children and parents - 57%, 61% and 52%, respectively, low pay - 48, 50 and 62%, and excessive workload - 45, 51 and 62%, respectively (Section 2, page 22, Subsection 2.1, page 23).

The state's encouragement of teaching staff turnover has resulted in 3,100 teachers having left work during the three years, including 2,194 retirements, but no assessment of how many leaving teachers found employment in other schools or of the remaining demand was made. According to the Ministry, there were more leavers in 2020 due to the pandemic. An increasing number of municipalities (24 in 2020 and 39 in 2022) are using measures to attract teachers, e.g. 709 teachers found employment through these measures in 2022. However, only 5 of the 39 municipalities that applied the measures plan to perform an assessment of their effectiveness in order to select the most impactful ones. Municipalities and schools compete with each other to attract teachers already

working in other schools, which does not address the shortage. The scale, impact and effectiveness of the measures taken are not analysed (Subsection 2.3, page 28).

The average salary of teachers has been increasing annually since 2019 and, according to the Ministry's data, the *gross* average salary in 2022 was EUR 2,041.2. The indicator does not reflect the average salary of all teachers, as it is calculated on the basis of quarterly averages of general education teachers only and not on the basis of primary data. According to the assessment of the auditors the relationship between teachers' salaries and the national average salary varies by age group: in 2022, teachers under 25 and 50+ earned more than the national average salary for the same age group in a full-time job, while teachers aged 25-29 earned on average 30 % less than the national average salary for the same age group, teachers aged 30-34 earned 35 % less, and 35-49 – 16 % less. Out of all the teachers, teachers aged 25-34 earned the least (Subsection 2.1, page 23).

Less than a third (28%) of all teachers in schools were employed on a full-time basis, with the lowest proportion (7%) of general education teachers, and 36% of general education teachers in state and municipal schools employed on less than one full-time basis. Lower workloads do not guarantee the desired salaries and contribute to teacher shortages. To address the shortage of teachers, schools are offering them higher workloads: 57% of general education teachers in state and municipal schools worked more than 1 full-time equivalent. An increasing number of teachers are securing a higher workload in one school. To address the shortage of teachers, schools are recruiting people without teaching qualifications (including students), who have to acquire them within two years (Subsection 2.2, page 26 and Subsection 2.4, page 32).

Without assessing the scale, impact and effectiveness of measures to attract teachers, without detailed information on average teacher salaries by age group, and with uneven teacher workloads, the most attractive measures for teachers of different age groups and those attracting the majority of new teachers are not identified so that the necessary action can be taken to balance the number and age of teachers to ensure the quality and continuity of education (Section 2, p. 22).

Are all forms of study used to train teachers?

In 2018, teacher training centres were established in Lithuania. These are the Vilnius University and the Vytautas Magnus University. Although planned, but the results of the changes to the teacher education system have not yet been assessed (Section 3, page 34).

In 2020, the largest share of support for pedagogical studies – 29% – was designated for pre-school and pre-primary education students. In 2022 and 2023, priority support for pedagogical studies did not change the choice of specialisations in the first cycle: science education was chosen by a few students only, while primary education and special education were chosen by the same number of applicants as in previous years. The enrolment in pre-school and pre-primary education was also the highest among students without support. In 2020-2022, there were no competitions for first cycle pedagogical studies, as applicants did not choose them; the average scores of those enrolled in state-funded first cycle pedagogical studies decreased: from 5.65 to 5.34 in colleges and from 7.16 to 7.11 in universities. In 2023, the scores increased: to 5.91 in colleges and 7.14 in universities. No pedagogical specialisation was among the 30 specialisations with the highest average scores for admission to state-funded places. The number of students dropping out has increased in colleges: 7% in 2019 and 9% in 2022. In the priority specialisations in universities, the highest number of drop-outs was in the subject of pedagogy, e.g. Physics, Mathematics, History, and Geography (Subsection 3.1, page 35).

In 2023, the largest share of pedagogical graduates in universities was in primary and pre-primary education - 95 or 43%. Science education, such as Chemistry and Physics, had only 1-3 graduates each. In 2022, graduates in Physical Education and Sports Education accounted for the largest share (79 or 31%). In 2023, this share dropped to 14%. 46% of pedagogy graduates do not find employment in schools, with graduates of Physical Education (21%) having the most difficulty in finding a job, followed by one third of graduates in Languages, Mathematics, Science Education and Arts. 14% of graduates planning to work as teachers would choose to work in a regional school (Subsection 3.3, page 45).

Studies in professional pedagogy and retraining are the most popular ways of obtaining the teaching profession and additional specialisation (competitions for 1.5 and 1.75, respectively). Because of their duration (1-1.5 years) and price, these studies can provide the fastest and least expensive way to train teachers. Retraining is popular among teachers who wish to acquire other teaching qualifications and become more flexible in their work in schools. The number of students opting for retraining is decreasing (237 in 2020, 194 in 2022), and the number of dropouts is the highest at 18.4% compared to other forms of teacher training (Subsection 3.2, page 42).

First cycle pedagogical studies do not provide sufficient teacher training, and almost half of graduates do not find employment in schools. Supporting these studies may not achieve the goal of attracting motivated future teachers who will graduate and come to work in schools. Professional pedagogy studies and retraining help to attract new teachers and retain existing teachers in schools. It is important to search for more diverse ways of attracting and preparing future educators and to make an even greater use of professional pedagogy studies and retraining to meet the demand for educators (Section 3, page 34).