

INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN CHILDREN INTO THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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SUMMARY

Relevance of the Audit

The OECD research shows that foreign children face language barriers and social exclusion, which affect their learning outcomes and further educational aspirations. Without early support to address integration challenges, social tensions and long-term social and economic costs increase, making it essential for the education system to provide additional support and targeted integration measures¹.

In Lithuania, education is compulsory and guaranteed by the State² for all children up to the age of 16, including foreigners³. The number of foreign children arriving in Lithuania increased significantly after the 2022 war in Ukraine and continues to grow every year: in 2021–2022, foreign children accounted for 0.58% of all pupils in general education schools, and in 2024–2025, they will account for 4.18%⁴.

This audit contributes to the cooperative audit carried out by the supreme audit institutions of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany (State of Hesse), Ukraine, and Lithuania in 2024–2025 on the topic “The Realisation of the Right to Education for Ukrainian Children in Schools of the European Countries”.

¹ OECD [Migration](#) Data Brief No. 15, 2025.

² Law on Education, Article 2(23), Article 24(3)(1).

³ For those who have the right to reside permanently or temporarily in the Republic of Lithuania.

⁴ 14,618 out of 349,332.

Objective and Scope of the Audit

The objective of the audit is to assess whether conditions for the effective integration of all foreign children into the general education system are in place.

Key audit questions:

- ✓ whether the planning and monitoring of the results of the integration of foreign children into the general education system is ensured;
- ✓ whether the organisation of the education of foreign children ensures their effective integration into the general education system.

Audited entities: The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which shapes the State policy in the field of education⁵, organises, coordinates, and controls its implementation. The National Agency for Education, whose one of the objectives is to monitor public education and make proposals to the Ministry on the formulation of education policy within its competence.

We collected data and information from 10 selected municipalities, 55 selected general education schools⁶, 5 non-state schools implementing the Ukrainian education programme, 10 pedagogical psychological services, and 3 teacher training centres (Annex 2, page 55).

The audit period is 2022–2024. In order to assess the trends and changes, in some cases we used data from previous years and 2025.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions⁷. The audit criteria, procedures performed and methods used are described in more detail in Annex 2 “Audit Criteria, Procedures Performed and Methods Used” (page 55).

Key Audit Results

Key result

For the system of integrating foreign children into general education to work effectively, the following is needed: equal opportunities for these children to learn the Lithuanian language and receive the necessary educational support, consistent development of teachers' qualifications, targeted planning of the integration of these children into general education, and systematic evaluation of the integration results.

1. Organisation of education for foreign children

⁵ Formal and non-formal education, educational support, recognition of qualification system and competences, minimum and average supervision of children

⁶ Those who provide education in accordance with the Lithuanian education programme

⁷ ISSAI 3000 - Performance Audit Standard, available online at: <https://www.issai.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ISSAI-3000-Performance-Audit-Standard.pdf>

In 2024–2025, less than half of foreign children were educated in Lithuanian as the language of instruction

- ✓ The proportion of foreign children learning in the Lithuanian language has been decreasing every year and in 2024–2025 amounted to 44%. 29% of foreign children studied in Russian, 21% in Ukrainian, and the remaining 6% in English, Belarusian, Polish, and French. In eight municipalities of Lithuania, less than half of foreign children studied in the official Lithuanian language (e.g., 13% in Klaipėda Municipality in 2024–2025 and 28% in Vilnius Municipality). It is more difficult for foreign children attending schools that implement national minority or foreign country programmes to learn Lithuanian well, as most of the educational process is organised in another language. This affects their integration – insufficient knowledge of the official language increases segregation, hinders children’s involvement in society and the Lithuanian environment, and limits their opportunities to study at Lithuanian higher education institutions in the Lithuanian language.
- ✓ Between 2022 and 2025, five Ukrainian schools were established in Lithuania, with 37% of Ukrainian children attending them in 2024–2025. The conditions for establishing schools that implement the educational programmes of foreign countries and international organisations in Lithuania are not strict: it is necessary to obtain the consent of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, submit a description of the programme, confirmation from the foreign institution, ensure the teaching of the Lithuanian language, and have premises that meet the hygiene requirements. The school must also submit to the Ministry a letter from the competent authority informing it which foreign state or international organisation will supervise the quality of education⁸. The legislation does not specify how the Ministry should verify that such supervision is carried out and in what form it should be proven. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for supervising compliance with the conditions for the implementation of programmes of foreign countries and international organisations⁹, but the procedure, frequency and evaluation criteria for implementation are not defined and systematic supervision is not carried out. In the absence of proper regulations establishing the requirements for the establishment and supervision of schools, favourable conditions are created for the establishment of schools implementing foreign programmes, thus, not promoting integration and not reducing segregation (Sub-section 1.1, page 15).

There is a lack of equal opportunities for foreign children to learn the Lithuanian language

- ✓ In order to integrate successfully, it is very important to learn the language of the host country¹⁰. For the most intensive Lithuanian language teaching for foreign children, compensatory classes are organised during their first year of arrival in Lithuania. According

⁸ The Procedure for Issuing, Suspending and Revoking a Consent to Implement Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations (except for Higher Education Study Programmes) approved by Government Resolution No. 649 of 6 June 2012, para. 7.1. It should be noted that an exception has been made for Ukrainian general education and vocational training programmes – consent to implement them may be granted even without the submission of these documents. The operator of the programme must submit them within one year from the end of the temporary protection period (4 March 2027).

⁹ The Procedure for Issuing, Suspending and Revoking a Consent to Implement Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations (except for Higher Education Study Programmes) approved by Government Resolution No. 649 of 6 June 2012, paras. 26–28.

¹⁰ In 2020, the EC approved the Action Plan of Integration and Inclusion for 2021–2027 ([EUR-Lex - 52020DC0758 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)).

to data from 1 September 2022, there were compensatory classes in 11 (out of 60) municipalities, on 1 September 2023 in 7, on 1 September 2024 in 4 municipalities¹¹. Another method of intensive official language teaching is when foreign children in grades 5–10 and gymnasium grades I–IV learn the Lithuanian language separately from their classmates. We have found that one-third (18 out of 55) of the selected schools taught foreign children the Lithuanian language separately from their class during their first year in Lithuania¹². The Lithuanian language consultations are also organised for foreign children. In most of the selected schools (51 out of 54), these consultations were organised during the audit period. According to the schools, attendance at consultations is usually optional and not recorded in the record book, thus, it is difficult to ensure that children attend them and learn the Lithuanian language as an additional subject. The most favourable ways for foreign children, except for primary school pupils, to learn the official language are those when children are intensively learning Lithuanian in compensatory classes during their first year in the country, or when they are learning all Lithuanian language lessons separately from the class while attending general classes. The afore-mentioned intensive Lithuanian language learning methods for foreign children are also recommended by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport¹³. Failure to provide equal opportunities to learn the Lithuanian language in the most intensive and favourable ways in all schools in the country does not ensure effective learning of the Lithuanian language by foreign children, which has a direct impact on their successful integration (Sub-section 1.2, page 18).

- ✓ At the end of the adaptation period, the level of the Lithuanian language proficiency of foreign children must be determined, and their readiness to continue learning with their peers must be assessed. A quarter (14 out of 55) of the selected schools have assessed the level of the Lithuanian language proficiency of all or some of the foreign children after their adaptation period¹⁴. Schools lack more detailed regulation specifying who should assess the level of the Lithuanian language proficiency of these children and when, and there are no standardised tests developed at the national level. Determining the level of the Lithuanian language proficiency of foreign children is one of the most important indicators for measuring their integration into the education system. Additionally, assessing the language proficiency of these children can help identify pupils who need educational support. As policymakers, this data would help the Ministry identify which method of teaching Lithuanian to foreign children in their first year of arrival yields the best results (Sub-section 1.2, [page 23](#)).
- ✓ The Ministry has not set a minimum number of Lithuanian language lessons per week in schools implementing the general education programmes of foreign countries and international organisations. This is also not specified in the Government Resolution regulating the issuance of permits to implement the education programmes of foreign

¹¹ According to data from 1 September 2022, 195 foreign children were enrolled in compensatory classes, 116 on 1 September 2023, and 89 on 1 September 2024

¹² According to the Lithuanian language proficiency levels (A1-B2) programme

¹³ General Education Plans for Primary, Basic, and Secondary Education Programmes for the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 Academic Years approved by Order No. V-586 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 24 April 2023, Annex 10, Part 2; Circular No. SR-2534 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of 29 June 2022 “On the Education of Ukrainian Children in the 2022–2023 Academic Year”

¹⁴ Most foreign children are assigned to levels A1–A2

countries and international organisations¹⁵. In all five non-state schools implementing Ukrainian general education programmes, Ukrainian children are taught the Lithuanian language at different levels of intensity: in 2024–2025, the number of weekly Lithuanian language lessons in these schools ranged from 2 to 5–7. This creates unequal conditions for Ukrainian children to learn the official language, as 2–3 weekly Lithuanian language lessons are not sufficient for the successful learning and integration of Ukrainian children (Sub-section 1.2, page 24).

- ✓ We have found that in 2025, 52% of foreign children (469 out of 910) did not achieve the threshold level (4 points) in the basic education achievement tests in Lithuanian language and literature, and 58% (128 out of 222) of these children failed in the state matriculation exam in the Lithuanian language and literature (level B). Failure to create equal opportunities for all foreign children to learn the Lithuanian language results in significant difficulties in achieving good academic results. This limits the opportunities for foreign children to continue their studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions, as insufficient Lithuanian language exam results prevent them from obtaining a maturity certificate or a sufficiently competitive score. This is one of the reasons why some foreign children choose private or foreign-language general education schools (e.g., Ukrainian) (Sub-section 1.2, page 25).

Providing the necessary educational support to foreign children would help them integrate more smoothly into general education schools

- ✗ A professional team of school educational support specialists, pupil assistants, individual education plans, and cooperation with the child's parents can help foreign children receive targeted education and integrate successfully¹⁶. The organisation of educational support and the availability of providers for foreign children in schools vary. Individual education plans were drawn up for all foreign children in less than half (49%; 27 out of 55) of the selected schools. 47% (26 out of 55) of the selected schools did not assign pupil assistants, while 42% (23 out of 55) did, but not to all children. 7% (4 out of 55) of schools did not assign a psychologist to foreign children because they did not have one. Failure to ensure that all immigrant children receive individual education plans and the necessary support reduces their chances of successfully integrating into the education system.
- ✓ None of the 10 selected municipalities collect information on the need for educational support for foreign children. The Ministry and the National Agency for Education do not have systematic data on the number of educational support specialists assigned to these children, the prepared individual education plans, so it's not clear at the national level whether all the learning support needed to make it easier to integrate into the education system is being provided (Sub-section 1.3, page 28).

Consistent professional development would help teachers acquire the necessary competencies and prepare them to educate foreign children

- ✓ Lithuania does not have a separate national professional development programme (hereinafter referred to as the “national programme”) for teaching staff (except for higher

¹⁵ The Procedure for Issuing, Suspending and Revoking a Consent to Implement Education Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations (except for Higher Education Study Programmes) approved by Government Resolution No. 649 of 6 June 2012

¹⁶ Dr. D. Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė; R. Kuktienė, I. Kuolienė, K. Stankutė-Matė, Description of Models for Organising the Education of Returning Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and Arriving Foreigners, 2022, paras. 6 and 11.

education staff) dedicated to the education of foreign children although the second priority area for teacher professional development is designed to enable them to work in a multi-ethnic and multicultural environment and to help differentiate, individualise, personalise and internalise the content of education. Such a programme or separate training module would help teachers to consistently acquire the necessary competences for working with children who have arrived from abroad. None of the 10 selected municipalities conducted annual teacher training courses related to the education of these children, and 6¹⁷ (out of 10) municipalities did not conduct such training in any of the audited years. 16% (9 out of 55) of the selected schools did not participate in any professional development events related to the education of foreign children during the audited period. 29% (16 out of 55) of the selected schools indicated that their teachers did not have enough events or training on the topic of educating these children. 40% (22 out of 55) of these schools believe that the content of the training courses attended by teachers on the education of foreign children only partially addresses the most relevant issues or problems encountered in their daily work. Lithuania fails in ensuring consistent professional development for teachers focused on working with foreign children, which is why not enough teachers acquire or foster the specific competences needed to work with children who have arrived from foreign countries (Sub-section 1.4, page 32).

2. Planning and assessment of general education for foreign children

There is a need for targeted planning and responsibility for the integration of foreign children into the general education system

- ✓ The number of foreign children arriving in Lithuania is increasing every year. During the audited period (2022–2024), their number in general education increased by 37%¹⁸. The National Progress Plan¹⁹ sets out a task related to the integration of these children but does not establish indicators to measure the implementation of the task. The Programme of the 20th Government²⁰ also does not specify the objectives and actions aimed at the education and integration of foreign children into general education schools. The Education Development Programme²¹ sets out the progress measures and indicators focused only on the education of returning Lithuanian children, even though in 2024–2025 they accounted for 0.09% of all children in general education, while foreign children accounted for 4.18%. The 2023 strategic planning documents of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport provided for specific measures for the integration of foreign children into Lithuanian schools but these were not included in the documents of the following year and are currently not included. The strategic planning documents of municipalities (9 out of 10 selected) also do not provide for any measures for the integration of these children. This shows that the activities of the Ministry and municipalities in this area are not being planned consistently to ensure the effective integration of foreign children into the general education system. A unified and consistent model for the education of foreign

¹⁷ Vilnius City Municipality, Vilnius District Municipality, Klaipėda City Municipality, Molėtai District Municipality, Palanga City Municipality, Švenčionys District Municipality

¹⁸ From 10,699 to 14,618

¹⁹ The National Progress Plan for 2021–2030 approved by Government Resolution No. 998 of 9 September 2020

²⁰ The Programme of the 20th Lithuanian Government approved by the Seimas Resolution No. XV-439 of 25 September 2025

²¹ The Education Development Programme approved by Government Resolution approved No. 1016 of 1 December 2021

children in schools would help to ensure their effective integration ([Sub-section 2.1, page 36](#)).

- ✓ Lithuania is obliged to ensure the education of foreign children in accordance with EU Directives²². However, the Regulations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport do not provide for functions related to the integration of these children into general education. Nor does it provide for the implementation of the functions assigned to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport²³ in relation to the implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC²⁴ by specific departments and employees of the Ministry. The regulations of one municipality (Vilnius) out of 10 selected education departments provide for the function of organising the education of foreign children. Without defining the functions of the Ministry, its departments and employees in the field of education for foreign children and without assigning specific functions to municipal education departments and their employees, it is not possible to properly plan and ensure the integration of these children (Sub-section 2.1, page 38).

The Ministry and the Agency do not know how much funding has been allocated and used for the education of foreign children

- ✓ Foreign children who do not speak Lithuanian are allocated increased funding for their education for up to two years from the start of their education in Lithuania, applying a set coefficient, which amounts to an additional amount of EUR 922²⁵ per child per year. The Ministry and the Agency do not have or structure data on the funding allocated and used from the State budget for the education of these children. The education management information system does not have a function that allows these expenses to be identified. In addition, the calculation of appropriations allocated for the education of a class, but not a pupil, is regulated²⁶. Municipalities also do not have data on the funding allocated and used for the education of foreign children from the state and municipal budgets. Since 2022, the number of Ukrainian children in the national general education schools has been growing rapidly on an annual basis, and additional funding from the State budget has been allocated periodically throughout the year for their education in a separate supplement²⁷. Between 2022 and 2025, the amount of EUR 129,918,100 was allocated for the general education of Ukrainian children. However, the Ministry and the Agency do not dispose of data on how the aforementioned funding was used and do not structure it. During the audited period, the amount of EUR 26,647.3 thousand was allocated from the State budget to five non-state general education schools that provide education in accordance with the Ukrainian education programme. Without information on how much

²² Council Directive 77/486/EEC of 25 July 1977 on the education of the children of migrant workers; Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the qualification and status of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and the content of the protection granted

²³ Council Directive 77/486/EEC of 25 July 1977 on the education of the children of migrant workers

²⁴ Order No. ISAK-789 of the Minister of Education and Science of 4 June 2003 "On the Implementation of the Education of Children of Foreigners Who Have Arrived in the Republic of Lithuania to Work or Live in General Education Schools, para. 5.1

²⁵ The education funds calculated for migrants (education needs coefficient*basic salary (remuneration) base amount) from 1 September 2025 amount to EUR 922 (0.5162*1,785.4=922). Education needs coefficient values for previous periods: 2022 – 3.2779 (EUR 593), in 2023 – 3.6057 (EUR 671), from 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2024 – 0.4132 (EUR 738), from 1 September 2024 to 1 September 2025 – 0.4772 (852 EUR).

²⁶ The Procedure for the Calculation, Distribution and Use of Training Funds approved by Government Resolution No. 679 of 11 July 2018

²⁷ When allocating training funds, the orders of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on the distribution of special targeted subsidies for educational needs among municipalities shall be followed

funding was allocated and used for the education of foreign children, it is not known whether the money was used for its intended purpose and efficiently (Sub-section 2.2, page 39).

The effectiveness of the integration of foreign children into the general education system is not assessed

- ✓ The set of strategic and tactical education monitoring indicators does not include a single indicator for assessing the effectiveness of the integration of foreign children into general education. None of the 10 selected municipalities monitor such indicators. None of them conducted any analyses on this topic during the audited period. Four out of ten municipalities do not collect data related to the integration of foreign children into general education, five municipalities monitor changes in the number of foreigners (statistics), and only one municipality collects more detailed information about foreign children arriving from schools. In the absence of indicators and analysis of information, it is not possible to identify problems, take action, and assess the progress of integration of foreign children into general education at the national and municipal levels.
- ✓ Only 1 of the 55 schools selected by the auditors has established and monitors indicators for assessing the integration of foreign children²⁸. The vast majority (44 out of 55) of schools believe that such indicators would be useful: they would allow for systematic monitoring and objective assessment of the integration process, help to plan resources and support measures in a reasonable manner, and enable comparison of school results. It is important to have appropriate indicators for assessing the success of integration of foreign children, as the results of the assessment could be used to ensure high-quality education and smooth integration (Sub-section 2.3, page 42).

Recommendations

To the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

1. In order to ensure the effective integration of foreign children into the education system, a national model for the education and integration of foreign children should be developed and enshrined in legislation (Audit result 1).
2. In order to provide all foreign children with equal opportunities to learn the Lithuanian language:
 - 2.1. to ensure that the majority of foreign children (except for primary school pupils) receive intensive education during their first year of arrival: in compensatory classes or in separate Lithuanian language lessons;
 - 2.2. to prepare standardised tests to determine the level of the Lithuanian language proficiency of foreign children (A1–B2). To determine who should test these children and when;

²⁸ Indicators of these children's learning achievements, participation in non-formal education, and their parents' involvement

- 2.3. to set a minimum number of weekly Lithuanian language lessons for schools implementing the education programmes of foreign countries and international organisations, according to different age groups of pupils. To establish that the Lithuanian language level of foreign children must be tested. To evaluate the aforementioned schools on the implementation of the Lithuanian language programme;
- 2.4. to ensure that foreign countries and international organisations provide feedback to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport on the quality of education in schools implementing the education programmes of foreign countries and international organisations (Audit result 1).
3. In order to ensure that all foreign children receive the educational support necessary for their successful integration into general education schools:
 - 3.1. to determine what educational and learning support should be provided to foreign children during the adaptation period and in what cases;
 - 3.2. to collect data on the need for educational support and its actual provision (by specific specialists) to foreign children annually (Audit result 1).
4. In order for teachers to acquire the necessary competences and be prepared to educate foreign children, to develop a separate national teacher training programme/module dedicated to the education of foreign children (Audit result 1).
5. In order to create the conditions for the targeted and coordinated integration of foreign children into the general education system:
 - 5.1. to establish measures and indicators for the integration of foreign children in strategic education planning documents;
 - 5.2. to define the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and municipalities for the integration of foreign children into the general education system (Audit result 2).
6. In order to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and justification of funding for the integration of foreign children:
 - 6.1. to establish the indicators at the national, municipal, and school levels to assess the results of the integration of foreign children into the general education system and evaluate and analyse this data annually;
 - 6.2. to conduct an analysis to determine whether the current education needs coefficient used to calculate the annual funding for the education of foreign children is sufficient to ensure intensive Lithuanian language teaching and the necessary educational support (Audit result 2).

Recommendations to municipalities

The municipalities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys and other municipalities where an increase in the number of foreign children is observed should collect data on the need for and the actual provision of educational support (by individual specialists) to foreign children on an annual basis. To recommend that schools implement measures to encourage the involvement of foreign children's parents in the education process and cooperation with

the school. To collect data on the need to develop teachers' qualifications in relation to the education of foreign children and organise training to meet those needs; plan annual tasks, measures, and indicators for ensuring the education of foreign children.

We submitted proposals to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the National Agency for Education²⁹ on the collection, accumulation, and provision of data on foreign children who are not in education in the Information System on Pupils who are not in Education and do not Attend School. We submitted proposals to the Ministry, the Agency, and the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania³⁰ on monitoring the development of teachers' qualifications, assessing the learning difficulties experienced by foreign children due to education not being provided in their native language, and supervising the integration of children studying remotely in Ukrainian schools.

The measures and deadlines for implementing the recommendations, the expected impact of the audit, and the indicators for assessing change are presented in the section "Plan for Implementing the Recommendations" of the report (page 46). Up-to-date information on the status of the implementation of the recommendations, results, and changes that have taken place is published in open data on the website of the National Audit Office <https://www.valstybeskontrole.lt/LT/AtviriDuomenys>.

²⁹ National Audit Office letter No. SD-(220-9.3.1-E-6258)-673 of 5 August 2025

³⁰ National Audit Office letter No. SD-(220-9.3.1-E-6258)-1003 of 9 December 2025