

BOLDIC – LITHUANIA REPORT

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN LITHUANIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Size and population

In 2009, Lithuania will celebrate its 1000th anniversary. During this period of time, there were both great achievements and bitter losses. Today we undergo the period of creative work and fulfilment of hopes. We are engaged in creation of the internet gateway ensuring better access to the information treasury of our country. Our small but in many ways attractive country is on its way of creating prosperous and safe conditions of life.

The surface area of Lithuania is 65 300 square kilometres, and the population of the country is approximately 3,5 mln. The biggest cities in Lithuania are Vilnius, the capital, with population 550 000, Kaunas, 370 000, Klaipeda, the port of Lithuania, 190 000, and Siauliai, 130 000.



General Information about the Republic of Lithuania

Population/Population density	3, 458 200/55.7 inhabitants per sq. km
Total area	65,300 sq. km
Capital, population	Vilnius, 550 000
State language	Lithuanian
Urban population	68.2 per cent.
Territorial-administrative division	10 counties, 60 municipalities
National currency	Litas (LTL) = 100 cents
Gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices	42, 768 million Litas

GDP per capita	11, 546 Litas
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	10.1
Industry	23.6
Construction	7.9
Services	58.3

IT: COMPUTER USAGE

In 2002, constant internet users made 13,1 per cent of all Lithuanian citizens, and 11,8 per cent of all households were equipped with a PC.

The use of IT in Lithuania and EU in 2001

	Lithuania	EU average
Constant internet users compared with the number of population, %	11,3	35,0
Households equipped with PC compared with total number of households, %	9,0	36,1
IT and related students compared with the total number of students, %	5,3	4,0
Internet users purchasing on the internet compared with the total number of internet users, %	3,0	44,0
The number of computers per 100 schoolchildren	2,5	8,6
The number of computers per 100 residents	7,1	30,4
The number of internet users per 100 residents	6,8	31,4

ICT at schools. Some secondary schools have computer classes but it is not the case in the majority of them. As it was stated in the Lithuanian Human Development Report 2000, between 1998 and 1999, there was one computer for every 55 pupils in grades 5 to 12. Information technology classes were given in 84% of urban schools and just 16% of rural secondary schools and gymnasiums (15 to 18 years). The figures for basic schools are 21% and 5% respectively. Scarcity of financing and lack of qualified teachers is usually blamed for inadequate computer literacy. Insufficient investment in education, as far as computer instalment in schools is concerned, does not allow the younger generation to fully benefit from the advances in new technology. Technical assistance from international donors may significantly shorten the distance to the e-world.

IT became a powerful tool for higher education institutions, for teachers and researchers, as well as for correspondent students and traditional studies. Nevertheless, though new technologies became an important power, institutions should not forget the fact that

current technologies will become out of date very quickly, and it is important to think about flexibility and about the future needs and their implementation.

IT usage not only improved the access to science and training, but also the quality of the content delivered. Up to now, the training based on IT, delivered in Lithuania, seemed intimidating and replacing traditional studies, and not many thought about the possibilities it provides.

Nevertheless, more and more youth training centres, NGOs, adult education organizations, information and consultation centres and other education institutions use IT in their course delivery and introduce various learning environments and new learning methods to Lithuanian youth and adult audience.

IT accessibility

Only one third (31%) of Lithuanian population aged from 15 and older are able to use a computer, about one fifth use internet. 13,1 % of Lithuanians have a computer at home, 6,6 % of the population have internet access in their households.¹ Meanwhile in 2000 in EU member states the average number of inhabitants having a desktop computer at home was 35 %, and 36,1 % of inhabitants had internet access in their households.²

The level of computer literacy of Lithuanian population is related to their place of residence (town, country side), age and income. The greatest gap, or a demographic digital divide can be observed among (a) those whose income is the lowest and those whose income is the highest, (b) inhabitants of the countryside and those of the biggest towns (particularly of Vilnius and Kaunas), and (c) the youngest and the eldest respondents. The higher the education and income of the inhabitants, the younger the age, the bigger the towns they live in and the higher their social status, the higher is their level of digital literacy and more frequent their wish to exercise it.³

In 2001 23,1 % among Vilnius (the capital town of Lithuania) inhabitants had PCs in their households, among Kaunas inhabitants - 24,4 %, while in the country side the corresponding number was only 4,4 %.

The governmental policy seeks that the access to internet facilities would become cheaper and that more people would be able to use internet in everyday life. From the beginning of 2001, it is possible to access internet for a fixed price per month, and, since then, a number of internet users has rapidly increased. About 20-25 thousand internet users make good use of this service. Besides, 43 000 users have an access to internet in the educational sector.

Estimated number of hosts in the local Internet is 15660 hosts in 2715 zones within Lithuania. There are 6 major commercial internet service providers and 1 non-commercial - an academic network of Litnet organizations - in Lithuania. (<http://www.ceenet.org/database/country/lithuani.htm>).

¹ Šaulauskas, M.P. (2001). "Skaitmeninė Lietuva 2001". <http://www.osf.lt/lt/main.htm>

² Deiss, Richard. Information Society Statistics. Statistics in Focus, Theme 4 - 8/2002. Eurostat. http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-product/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=KS-NP-02-008-__-N-EN&mode=download

³ Šaulauskas, M.P. (2001). "Skaitmeninė Lietuva 2001". <http://www.osf.lt/lt/main.htm>

Private institutions are partially supporting promotion and making available access to the internet. Their participation in public programmes is becoming more and more active. For example Lithuanian Telecom and the company Omnitel create favourable financial conditions for schools, teachers and pupils for the access to the Internet. There also some local regional initiatives of private companies which make internet more accessible for educational purpose.

Internet use/ access

Academic and Research Network in Lithuania LITNET

Academical and Research Network in Lithuania LITNET provides internet services for more than 70000 users. Using lines of permanent connection, all higher education institutions, colleges, 36 state institutes and research institutions, more than 50 education institutions, 16 libraries and over 20 other organizations are united. The network is connecting over 7000 computers and servers from local networks integrated into LITNET.

LITNET forms an environment for other systems and networks: distance education network, libraries information system, science and education information system, information system for the admission to higher education institutions, and others.

Kaunas Regional Distance Education Study Centre at Kaunas University of Technology

For detailed information, see <http://distance.ktu.lt>

The number of Lithuanian citizens using the internet is very low. In 2000, the country was among those having the least number of internet users. In 2002, 33,92 % of Lithuanian schools had possibilities to use internet, but this rate varied among municipalities very much. At present, 138 schools and 84 % of all enterprises use the internet connection.

In 2001, the programme "Education for Information Society" was started to implement by the Ministry of Education and Science. This programme was based on the strategy of implementation of system of information and communication in Lithuania, which corresponds with the EU initiatives. It states that all Lithuanian schools should be provided with the possibility to use the internet and multimedia resources up to the end of the year 2001. All school teachers, students and youth, as well as adults, even living in more remote regions, should have possibilities to access internet, and such possibilities should be created at public centres. Some such centres have been created at libraries, NGOs', training and education centres, and other education institutions.

According to the programme "Lithuanian school in information society of the XXI century", it is planned that by the end of year 2004, every school will be connected to the internet and 1 PC will be for use of 10 pupils/students.

Now each school is paying the line costs. It is planned that these costs partly will be covered by the state.

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL AND TRAINING STRUCTURE

A short presentation of the general structure (not ODL related)

The Lithuanian education system comprises pre-school development, general education of children and youth, vocational and college education, higher education, and adult education.

The Government is responsible for the formation and implementation of education policy.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for:

- preparation and implementation of the state education development programmes,
- establishment of state education standards and control over their implementation,
- working out the criteria and methodology for education funding,
- creation of adequate learning conditions at educational institutions,
- functioning of the national quality assurance system,
- enhancement of educational research, teacher training, co-ordination of in-service training, and organisation of teacher appraisal.

The Ministry of Security Affairs and Labour:

- develops and implements state labour market vocational training policy,
- ensures the functioning and improvement of the labour market vocational training system,
- coordinates the development and administration of the classification of occupations.

Other ministries and government bodies organise the development and publication of teaching programmes and aids for vocational training institutions under their subordination and are in charge of improving the qualifications and re-training of teachers working in these institutions.

County governor administrations supervise the implementation of the general state policy in the area of education and are responsible for the working out and implementation of regional education development plans and the organisation of the inspection of educational institutions.

Municipalities ensure the functioning and maintenance of educational institutions under their subordination and create the conditions necessary for the heads and teachers of these institutions to improve their qualifications.

The state regulates and controls formal education, i.e. development, learning and studies, successful completion of which leads to a state recognised diploma or certificate. Non-formal education is organised on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Education, the Law on Non-formal Education, and other laws and statutory documents.

Financing

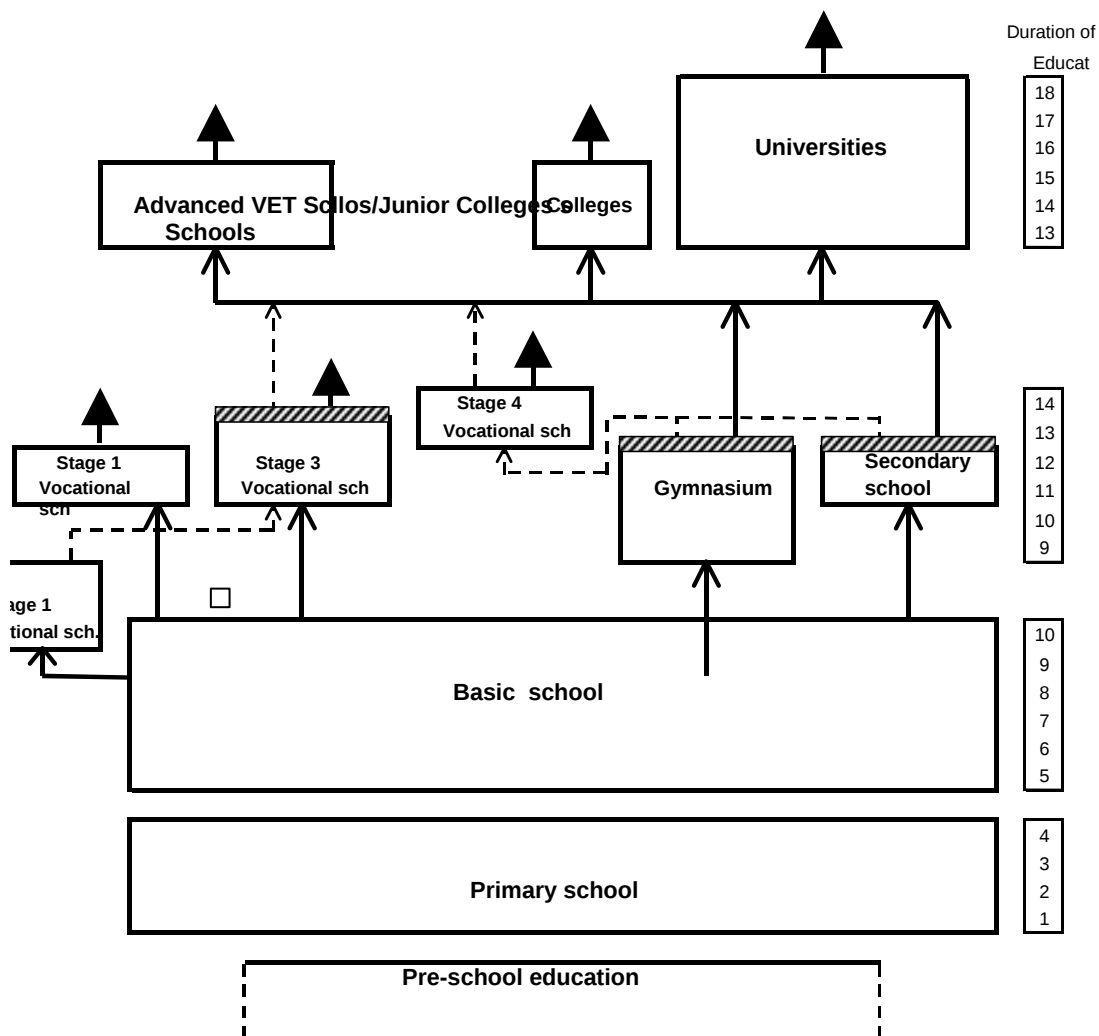
The principal sources of funding of state and municipal institutions of education are the state budget and the budgets of municipalities. Allocations for educational needs depend on the number of learners. Non-budgetary funds of educational institutions constitute another source of their financing. Non-state educational establishments are funded by their founding bodies. They receive support in the manner prescribed by the Government.

Tuition at state and municipality schools of general education, vocational schools, and junior colleges is free of charge. Tuition fees at non-state educational institutions are paid subject to agreement. Students making good progress at state-run higher education establishments receive grants.

Non-formal adult education can be financed by interested natural and legal persons and by students themselves. Funding from municipal and state budgets is also possible in the manner prescribed by the Government or its authorised institution. The state offers tax incentives to enterprises engaged in educational activity. Education spending in 1999 amounted to 30.6 per cent of the national budget.

Conceptual structure

Education is provided by general education schools (primary, basic, youth, secondary schools, gymnasiums); vocational, advanced VET schools, and higher education establishments (universities and colleges); institutions of special education. Education is compulsory for all pupils up to the age of 16 (inclusive).



Pre-school development	
<i>Pre-school Development Establishment</i>	Attendance at day nurseries (for children up to 3 years of age) and kindergartens (for children aged up to 6 or 7) is not compulsory. Children attending the kindergarten prepare for subsequent schooling and develop communication skills.
General Education	
<i>Primary School</i>	Covers first to fourth forms of general education schools. Admits children of at least six years of age.
<i>Basic School</i>	Comprises forms 5 to 10 of general education schools. On completion, pupils are awarded a basic school-leaving certificate.

<i>Youth School</i>	For pupils failing to adapt at general education schools, lacking motivation or forced to leave due to social circumstances. Covers the 12-16 age group. A basic school-leaving certificate awarded on completion. Does not lead to a vocational qualification.
<i>Secondary School</i>	Comprises forms 11 to 12. Graduates obtain a secondary school-leaving (maturity) certificate.
<i>Gymnasium</i>	Provides an in-depth, specialised general education. Gymnasiums specialise in humanities, science, technology, and fine arts. They normally cover forms from 9 to 12. Graduates are awarded a secondary school-leaving (maturity) certificate.
<i>Special education school</i>	Caters for the needs of pupils who, due to serious physical disability or impaired development are unable to attend general education schools.
Vocational Education and Training	
<i>Vocational Training Centres and Courses</i>	Institutions of continuous and initial vocational training offering training leading to a simple qualification needed for employment in the production and services sectors according to two level labour market vocational training programmes (formal education) or unregulated programmes (non-formal education). On completion of formal education programmes students are awarded qualification certificates.
<i>Vocational School</i>	Offers training leading to both a primary professional qualification needed for employment in the production and services sectors and general education. Vocational schools deliver training on the basis of four-level programmes varying in duration and content and catering for the needs of young people of different ages and educational background. On graduation, students are awarded a diploma of vocational education or a qualification certificate.
<i>Advanced VET School</i>	Provides advanced vocational training needed for employment in various branches of the economy and social activity as well as general cultural education. On graduation, students are awarded a Diploma of Advanced School Graduation.
Higher Education	
<i>College</i>	A higher education establishment with an emphasis on non-university studies, applied research and (or) applied scientific activities or professional art.
<i>Universities</i>	A higher education establishment delivering predominantly university education, engaged in scientific research, offering Masters-level and Doctoral programmes and (or) promoting high-level professional artistic activity or offering a Doctoral programme in the field of Art.

Institutions of vocational education and training (vocational training centres and courses, vocational schools), advanced schools and higher education establishments (colleges, universities) offer training that enables students to prepare for a professional career, acquire a primary vocational qualification, improve existing qualifications, or re-train.

On September 1, 2000, Lithuania had 19 universities (4 of them non-state), 7 colleges, i.e. non-university higher education establishments (3 of them non-state), 58 advanced schools (15 of them non-state), 84 vocational schools (3 of the non-state), 89

vocational training centres (83 of them non-state), 121 non-state vocational training courses. In the process of optimising the network of vocational schools, their number decreased from 104 in 1999 to 84 in 2000. The number of advanced schools also decreased as some of them were merged or were transformed into colleges.

***Number of institutions, learners, and teachers at the beginning of academic year
1999-2000***

<i>Type of Institution</i>	<i>Number of Institutions</i>	<i>Number of Learners</i>	<i>Including females, per cent</i>	<i>Number of Teachers</i>
Pre-school Development Establishments	713	93 444	47.8	12 526
General education Schools	2359	599 294	49.8	49 308
Vocational Schools	104	51 962	39.3	5 032
Advanced Schools	69	38 397	64.6	4 274
Universities	16	84 345	57.9	10 069

Sources of information: Lithuanian Statistical Yearbook, Department of Statistics, 1999
Education, Department of Statistics, 2000
Ministry of Education and Science

In Lithuania children start attending school at 6-7 years of age. The total duration of attending general school in Lithuania is 12 years: 4 years at primary school, 6 years at lower secondary school, and 2 at gymnasium or higher secondary school. All children receive compulsory lower secondary education.

A 10-point system is used for grading. A non-mark system is used to assess education achievements at primary school.

Pre-school education is provided for children from 1 to 5-6 years. The pre-school education curriculum is provided for children in traditional kindergartens, nurseries-kindergartens, kindergartens – schools and other educational institutions. Although demographic situation is changing towards decreasing the birth- rate (during the last five years, on average there are born 1,500 children less each year), the number of pre-school education institutions has not changed significantly (from 1996 to 2000 from 729 to 714). Pre-school education institutions are attended by more than a half of all children of appropriate age in Lithuania (more than 90,000).

A new idea of establishing **preparatory pre-school education groups** has been fostered since 1997. The preparatory pre-school education shall provide one year education for 5-6 year old children targeting at helping them to get ready for school. According to the data of 2001, there were 16,171 children (five times more than in the school year 1997-1998) attending preparatory pre-school education groups.

General secondary education is obtained at three levels: primary, lower secondary and secondary. In the school year 2002-2003, 576,000 school children were enrolled in 2113 general education secondary schools in Lithuania.

Primary education consists of 4 years of schooling (forms 1-4). The aim of primary education is to improve children's capacity for learning before the lower secondary level. The primary education curriculum comprises language, moral, social and natural sciences, mathematics, arts and technological education.

The purpose of **lower secondary education** is to provide an individual with socio-cultural and civic development, as well as with general and technological literacy, and to lay the basis of lifelong learning. The lower secondary education comprises the forms 5-10. IN the forms 9-10, the elements of diversity are implemented, providing the students with the possibility to choose subjects of different curriculum subjects, as well as to help to choose the right profile or further education or profession. Once one's lower secondary education is over, it opens the way to all secondary education options, i.e. different types of vocational training or upper secondary education.

The two-year **secondary education** leads to acquiring the secondary education, preparation for further education or acquisition of professional qualification. The programme is oriented to curriculum differentiation. Students may choose one of 4 profiles: the humanities, science and mathematics, technological subjects (implemented at technological gymnasiums and vocational schools), and arts (implemented at art gymnasiums, National art school, and conservatoires).

There is an **international Baccalaureate school** in Vilnius – a gymnasium that provide education in English.

Youth schools, heretofore unknown in Lithuania, were opened. These schools were geared for students, primarily teenagers, who lack motivation for learning. In the 1998 - 1999 school year, there were 23 youth schools functioning, which were being attended by 2,191 students. In comparison, during the same time there were 2,272 schools of basic education operating in Lithuania.

Special education schools cater for the youth who due to serious physical disabilities or impaired development are unable to attend general education schools. The number of children in special education schools decreases, because more and more of parents wish their children to attend schools closer to their place of residence.

Vocational education can be gained at institutions of basic vocational training (vocational schools), post-secondary vocational studies (colleges), non-university schools of higher education, and labour market vocational training (vocational training centres).

Studies in **college education** are being reorganised. The effort has been to co-ordinate the system with systems operating in most European countries, known as the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Only those persons, who have completed a secondary level of education, are accepted into colleges of post-secondary vocational education. Studies require 2 to 3 years. There were 37 state

colleges, and 16 state agricultural colleges functioning in 1998-1999.

Higher education

Even before recreation of Lithuanian independence on March 11, 1989, a reform had been started in the majority of Lithuanian schools of higher education to improve the content and the structure of the courses. One of the reform questions was funding of study process. Suggestions for statutes of higher education schools were also under preparation in the majority of Lithuanian schools of higher education.

The Law is concise and schematic leaving the Government to regulate most of the practical issues related to the operation of research and higher education institutions, as well as the organization of education. The most important resolutions adopted by the Government are the following: Typical Regulations of State HE Institutions, Classification of Research Field Areas, General Regulations on the System of Research Degrees and Academic Titles in the Republic of Lithuania, Qualification Regulations for HE, Regulations for the Establishment and Certification of Institutions of HE, Regulations of the Lithuanian State Research and HE Fund, Regulations for the Recognition of Qualifications Acquired Abroad, Procedures for Co-ordinating the Conditions for Admission to State Institutions of HE, Regulations for the Register of Study Programmes.

The main principles of changes in HE were determined in the consequence of these actions:

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

HE in Lithuania develops following positive tendencies of the world education (more information www.smm.lt, www.mokslas.lt, www.lmt.lt, www.skvc.lt).

Higher non-university education is provided by colleges that admit individuals having the maturity certificate. Studies at colleges last for 3-4 years and comprise theory and practice. Upon completion non-university studies graduates acquire a vocational qualification and a higher non-university education.

Higher university education can be acquired at 15 state and 4 private higher education institutions. The system of studies consists of two levels: after completing one's undergraduate studies, which last for four years, a student acquires a **Bachelor's degree**, after one and a half or two years of study – a **Master's degree**. The students having a Master's degree or integrated study are allowed to apply for doctoral studies. The Doctoral studies in Lithuania last for three or four years.

Non-formal Education

Non-formal adult education covers learning, personal development, or studies undertaken in the interests of an individual and society that do not lead to a state-recognised document attesting to a full or partial education, completion of a regulated module, or to the acquisition of a qualification. Programmes of non-formal education can be prepared and implemented by bodies of non-formal education and also by institutions of vocational education and training, general education and advanced schools, establishments of higher education, other natural and legal persons who, in the manner prescribed by the Government or its authorised institution, have been granted the right to engage in non-formal education activity. Legal persons can provide non-formal education if this type of activity is included in the statutes (articles of association) of such an enterprise, institution, or organisation. On completion of a non-formal education programme, learners may be issued a certificate that does not grant a vocational qualification.

Informal adult education. The appropriate law was passed in 1999. Administration of this branch of education is being decentralised. The goal of life-long learning was adjudicated as one of the priority assignments in the course of the development of the state. Tax privileges were earmarked for individuals and institutions which contribute funds to public education.

National policies on ODL

The process of modernisation of traditional correspondence based studies in Lithuania begun in 1993. Initial basis of modern distance education was created with the support of EU, Nordic countries, Open Society Fund and, from 1998, also with the help of Lithuanian Investment Fund. As the result of EU PHARE multi-country co-operation distance education development programme (1995-1999), two modern Distance Study Centres in Kaunas University of Technology (KUT) and Vilnius University (VU) were established, as a part of the network of 40 such centres in Eastern and Central Europe. Both centres have equipment for ODL programme creation and delivery, computer classes, facilities for demonstration of modern packages of learning material, and small libraries. The personnel were trained to create and deliver modern distance courses. The Ministry of Education and Science established Lithuanian Distance Education Centre, in 1996, to coordinate the implementation of programmes and to support development of distance education.

In 1996, the National Distance Education Board was established, as an expert in the shaping of Lithuanian distance education development policy. The members of the Board are rectors, vice-rectors and directors of higher education institutions, as well as representatives of various institutions. The Board approved Guidelines of Development of Distance Education in Lithuania, prepared in 1999. Relying on Guidelines, the project of Governmental Programme for Development of Distance Education in Lithuania, in 2001-2005, was prepared.

In 1997, the World Bank launched the initiative to create Global Distance Learning Network (GDLN). The Bank does not directly support creation of DL centres financially. Nevertheless, the steps made by Lithuania promise Lithuanian participation in GDLN

already in 2001, with the support of the World Bank. This step is important for the effective exchange of the world wide knowledge.

Approval and implementation of the Governmental Programme, as well as participation in GDLN, are extremely important steps in creating the basis of lifelong learning in information society in Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science www.smm.lt has quite similar goals comparing with EU:

- all schools must have internet connection and possibilities to use multimedia resources by the end of 2001;
- all school children and teachers must have access to different educational channels and global network services;
- all teachers must be individually supplied and be able to use internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002;
- all school children must have access to fast internet connection and multimedia resources in classrooms;
- all school children in secondary schools must complete computer literacy training by the end of 2003. ["Strategy of the Information and communication technologies in Lithuanian education", Ministry of Education and Science of the Lithuanian Republic]

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania established **Commission of the Development of Information Society**, in 2000. The main goal for the Commission is to stimulate the advancements of e-society. There are several initiatives supported by Ministry of Education and Science in the field of e-learning, e.g. business training, e-commerce, vocational training, and re-qualification.

The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, for the year 2000-2004, includes the articles related with the development of information society, as well as the priorities for the education reform:

- Education of an open-minded Lithuanian citizen;
- Education of the new information society;
- Development of a private education sector;
- Improvement of education management.

For the involvement of the unemployed into the labour market training centres should start using e-learning and distance training methods. These centres are getting subsidiaries from Lithuanian government for training of the unemployed, though still these people usually have no financial recourses for education and/or re-qualification. PHARE 2000 regional development Fund aims to contribute to human recourse development in Klaipeda, Taurage, Marijampole and Utena regions by establishment of distance training centres dedicated for vocational training.

The documents which forecast the development of e-learning and internet in Lithuania are:

- Strategy of the development of Information society,
- Strategy of instillation of ICT in Lithuanian education,
- Programme "Lithuanian school in information society of the XXI century".

The Objectives of ODL development in Higher Education

Traditional research universities are in the period of transition and can create a new environment for higher education. Universities have to become 'service universities'. The main goal of such universities is to be recognized as providers of knowledge-based services to their regions and the whole society. Considering the traditional teaching process in Lithuania, ODL should be designed on the basis of the present infrastructure of universities and colleges, while accumulating academic potential and evaluating real needs for ODL courses.

ODL provides the possibility to organise more flexible study process, and this provides the possibility for students to manage their time in the most effective way. Kaunas University of Technology (more information <http://www.ktu.lt>) uses the advanced computer technology and related opportunities while taking part in the ODL development project, as well as initiating new projects.

To develop the existing ODL system, we need to establish:

1. The system of training and professional development for organizers, lecturers, consultants and tutors of contemporary distance education programmes.
2. The system of encouragement for developing and re-establishing distance education programmes and formal distance studies modules.
3. The system of quality evaluation and quality assurance for distance education programmes.
4. The support system for the participants of distance education programmes.
5. Developed computer network and other means of telecommunication adjusted to distance education.
6. Legal basis for distance education.
7. Effective funding mechanism for the ODL system.

Universities deliver their own courses. They also serve to other universities and educational institutions as regional training centres, through which courses are delivered.

Non- governmental organizations support centres, e.g. Kaunas Non- governmental organizations support centre (www.knopc.lt) provides regular and free of charge consultations and regular trainings, seminars with some e-learning elements on the topics suggested mainly by the organizations themselves.

Many vocational training institutions became interested into use of ICT in education. Some courses are delivered using ICT, virtual laboratories are also under development.

Description of financing of ODL

E- learning is mainly financed from international and national projects. There are no special issues related with e-learning fixed in the national/ regional budget. Some initiatives of universities and other institutions in the field of distance education have received financial support from the national budget as well as from special funds of Ministry of Science and Education (see details in the previous and next responses).

Cooperation in ODL

One of the most characteristic features of the educational system in Lithuania is the **co-ordination between administration and self governing**. Self governing institutions are being formed at various levels, such as offices of education at the national, county, regional, and city or town levels. The function of such institutions is representation of the community, evaluation of activities in appropriate levels and fields of education, and recommendations for improvements. The self-governing institutions on the state level, such as the Council of General Curriculum, and Council of Education also handle the functions of educational expertise. *Expert Committees* of subject matter operate at the Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Lithuania. Academicians in education, and experienced practitioner pedagogues comprise such committees.

The cooperation between universities and local authorities is also very common in nowadays. The main goal of cooperation between universities and local government (the counties and municipalities) is not only to train their civil servants, but also to promote ODL, to make them interested in ODL, to involve municipalities and counties in ODL development.

The "Municipalities' Information Centre" is seeking to develop the internet availability and to implement computer literacy within local communities of Lithuania, as well as to develop their needs for operative and comprehensive information in all spheres of self-government regulation.

Our objective is to go step-by-step and purposefully towards the main objective: to use current ODL courses, to seek for the ways to develop other courses (using international and national funding, and inviting funding from industrial enterprises), and to develop ODL, both, for single modules and for diplomas.

Another trend is the creation of associations in Lithuania.

Association InfoBalt www.infobalt.lt was established as the main body:

1. to encourage the society's proper concern about the insufficient information development in Lithuania; to reveal the losses, as well as wasted possibilities;
2. to analyse new economy models and achievements in modern states;
3. to stress the importance of internet development on the way over to the new economy;
4. to initialise a constitutional amendment regarding the right for every Lithuanian citizen to have access to internet and e-learning ;
5. to determine the nearest priorities for the new economy creation;
6. to strengthen relations with the specialists of the European Union and to adapt their experience;
7. to actualise the role of science in information society;
8. to present the forecasts for the society, in which way the new economy is going to change our life.

The goal of Association InfoBalt is "jump to the New economy".

Lithuanian Computer Society <http://www.liks.lt/> is:

1. Stimulating progress of computerization and development of informatics as a perspective and important modern science and industry branch in Lithuania.
2. Forming the opinion of the society and the Government on questions of the use and management of the state's information resources and information technologies.

3. Taking care of the preparation and improvement of the professional skills of specialists and users in computers and informatics; taking care of teaching informatics and computers in general education schools.
4. Stimulating and supporting professional contacts and exchange of the urgent problem domain information, developing internal and international contacts and relationships.
5. Raising professional ethic of LIKS members, helping them in defending their author's rights, representing professional and author's interests of Lithuanian computer specialists both, in Lithuania and abroad.

The Lithuanian Employers Association, the Chamber of Industry, Trade and Craft use e-learning elements in their everyday life.

International co-operation

EU-programmes play quite important role in implementation of the e-learning in Lithuania. Many new courses, exchange of the experience and other activities are performed with the help of EU-programmes (SOCRATES www.socrates.it, Leonardo da Vinci www.leonardo.it, PHARE www.eudel.it and etc.). It helps to promote e-learning in the country. Very important aspect of the EU-programmes is innovation encourages the participants to find new innovative methods, means and ways in the education. E-learning is one of them. With the support of SOCRATES/MINERVA programme, the conference "Open and Distance Learning: Way to Information Society" elinara.ktu.lt/WIS was organised.

Lithuania takes part in the Information Society Technologies Programme (IST) (<http://www.cordis.lu/ist/home.html>) within the European Union's Fifth RTD Framework Programme (1998-2002). IST is a single, integrated research programme that builds on the convergence of information processing, communications and media technologies. IST has an indicative budget of 3.6 billion Euro and is managed by the Information Society DG of the European Commission.

ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES

Organisations

Response:

Lithuanian Telecom has special programme for the support of Lithuanian schools and their access to the Internet. There are also private funds which are supporting schools internet access and their computerization. For cheaper internet access some schools are seeking for possibilities to get connected to Lithuanian Academic and Research Computer Network through radio modems.

"Lithuanian Telecom" implemented the project in the Northwest region, launched in December, 1999, which was encouraged by the research made in Lithuania. The research showed that in more than 40% of schools the main reason for non-using Internet was a shortage of telephone lines, especially in rural areas. "Lithuanian Telecom" project was created to cover not only this shortage, but to propose for schools complete solution: Internet access line, necessary hardware and software, reduced Internet usage tariff, training of teachers and creation of educational content in Lithuanian on the Internet.

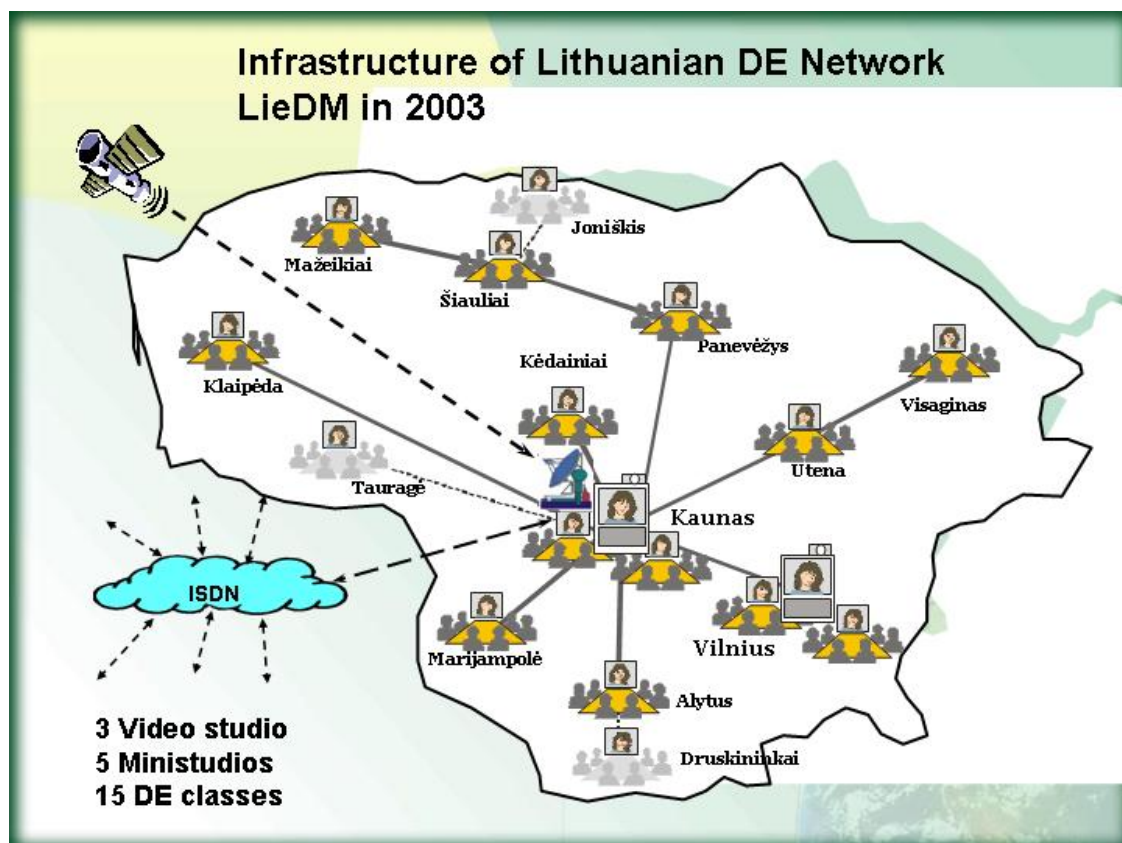
This project was very successful and was accepted by society very positively. During the project "Lithuanian Telecom" installed almost 100 free-of-charge telephone lines to ensure the Internet connection. The possibility to use Internet connection in schools at a reduced tariff encouraged teachers and students start use Internet. More than 200 schools are using this opportunity weekly at present. 180 computers were donated to the schoolteachers, legal software for which was provided free-of-charge by the Microsoft Corporation. Close to 700 regional teachers get training courses, financing for which was provided by "Lithuanian Telecom". Over 20000 Lt (5000 USD) were assigned to motivate creation of Lithuanian content in Internet. The total sum provided by the Company for this project was almost 300000 Lt (60000 USD).

Based on the success of the project "Lithuanian Telecom" decided to expand its support to the education system. The goals of the new Education Support Program are to promote the usage of information technologies at schools and to increase business and public interest to educational projects. The budget of the Program reaches 6 ml. Lt (1,5 ml. USD) and it is planned to run the Program for three years. The Program covers whole Lithuania now, than it is decided to make the closer cooperation with Ministry of Science and Education and to look for other partners for the successful implementation of the separate projects.

Omnitel private enterprise- one of private Internet providers- is always announcing contests for cheaper Internet. Right now the contest for getting subsidy for program "The school for Information society" is in progress. One hundred Lithuanian Schools were supported with internet access. The contest is held together with private Juozas Kazickas family fund, Viktoras Gediminas Gruodis fund and Information Technologies for Education Centre.

Educational sector, experience

In 1998 - 1999, the project "LieDM – the Development of Distance Education in Lithuania" (<http://www.liedm.lt/>) was initiated by Kaunas University of Technology (KUT) and financed by Lithuanian Investment Fund. The result of this project is the network of a central teaching video studio at Distance Study Centre at KUT and 10 remote classes connecting distance learning classes in Kaunas, Vilnius, Klaipeda, Siauliai, Panevezys, Kedainiai and Alytus. All of them have necessary equipment for video conferencing and Web-based learning. Central studio is located in Kaunas Regional Distance Education Centre. In 2000, Lithuanian government financed the extension of the project, and this infrastructure was expanded to other Lithuanian cities., a second central teaching studio at Vilnius University and three new distance learning classrooms were established. At present time, LieDM Network joins 3 studio, 5 ministudio and 15 remote DE classes (see a picture below). All these centres serve as local e-learning centres within institutions, but they also provide public access to videoconference facilities during all public events organised in this network.



Another project – “MetDM – the Methodological research in Distance Education (real-time-based)” metdm.ktu.lt – was initiated by Lithuanian universities and founded by Lithuanian Fund of Science and Studies. The institutions - project partners are: Klaipėda University, Šiauliai University, Panevėžys branch of Kaunas University of Technology, Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius University, and LITNET operating centre. The Coordinator is Kaunas DE Centre at KUT. In the framework of the project, methodological recommendations for distance education market analysis and preparation and management of the courses were developed. There were given instructions for the use of Virtual Learning Environment WebCT, as well as questionnaires for DE tutors, DE experts and students.

Lithuanian videoconferencing network. Video lectures Support System (ViPS)

In accordance with the LieDM project, the videoconference support system, i.e. the software used to organize an interactive videoconference, was developed at KRDESC at Kaunas University of Technology (<http://distance.ktu.lt/vips>). The main purpose of this software is to facilitate interaction between a teacher and students during a videoconference. Students sitting in remote classes get connected to the videoconference support system and follow the lecture, send their questions to the teacher, communicate among themselves, and follow the teachers' instructions.

Video lecturing is becoming a usual tool in today's universities. Although videoconferences are intended in a two-way communication, sometimes it is difficult to keep an interaction with remote students, especially in multipoint videoconferences.

Textile, Physics, Informatics students are using mixed mode in their learning process: a WebCT environment is used and videoconferences for consultations.

Web-based Learning tools and environment

There are two virtual learning environments which are mainly used for Web-based course development in Lithuania: WebCT and Luvit (Lund University Virtual Interactive Tool). For the creation of CD-ROM based courses, the Macromedia and Tool Book software is used at KTU. Printed materials, videotapes and audiocassettes support some courses. The software CDK –Course Development Kit (<http://distance.ktu.lt/cdk>) is currently being developed at KRDEC, which is aimed to improve course development process and for teachers not having good computer skills. This system is being created at XML basis.

Universities organise courses for teachers on e-learning. Distance Education Center at KUT and Vilnius DE Center are training teachers from other educational institutions on e-learning issues. Kaunas University of Technology pays much attention to the development of e-learning and training of the professors on this issue. Educational staff is also encouraged by University Rectorate to use ICT in education, and to create courses using ICT.

Vilnius University developed more than 150 ODL Courses:

Some of the courses will be included in complete DE Master degree studies for “International communication” in 2000/2001 academic year.

Professionals working at Kaunas Distance Education Centre and its modern technological equipment guarantees high quality services for university and outside university users. The experience gained in international projects and high competence of employees allows responding to the users' needs in flexible and creative ways, suggesting and implementing original ideas. The following types of services are provided:

- Training of Lecturers
- Creating of Courses
- Deliverign of Courses
- Video Conferences
- Multimedia studio
- Organising and assisting conferences
- Programming equipment

One of such programmes is the course LOLA – Learning About Open Learning, which was created with the support of PHARE programme and was translated into Lithuanian with the support of Open Society Fund Lithuania. This course is also delivered to the public. There were seminars, conferences and workshops organized concerning e-learning issues. Mass media is also involved in spreading the information about e-learning.

Lithuanian educationalists, teachers, trainers and other experts have an opportunity to participate in various international training programs, related with ODL and e-learning.

Two young experts have been taken a Diploma of DE Web-based course "Pedagogy in ODL" (Nordic Council project, 1998), 4 young experts have finished CEENET ODL course "Wired Education", 18 persons from various educational institutions have successfully received a Certificate of DE Web-based course "Learning about Open Learning (LOLA)" (Phare program, 1999). The ODL course "Learning about Open Learning" was translated to Lithuanian and about 90 teachers and educators have finished this course at Vilnius and Kaunas DE centres.

Strengths – weaknesses - opportunities

Use of ICT in education and e-learning became one of the most important issues in nowadays educational system. E-learning will give possibility for those who do not have other chance to obtain needed knowledge. It will become key-issue for continuous education and lifelong learning in Lithuania. E-learning is an inseparable part of lifelong learning, especially within information society. It will play more and more important role in Lithuanian educational system and its importance is stressed in governmental policy. For example, schools libraries will become centers of informational literacy

Changes related to the implementation of e-Government projects <http://www3.lrs.lt/owa-bin/owaarepl/inter/owa/U0022414.doc> (modernisation of public administration) will be very significant. Application of information technologies and use of their possibilities will strongly change our understanding about administration, ways and means of control, as well as the ways of reporting for the results and assessment of the efficiency of staff work.

Changes in understanding will strongly effect private and public institutions. Changes should be significant in client service field and information management, as well as decision making areas. The following changes are likely to take place.

Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) has made research about DE tutors motivation. This research was prepared for KUT purposes only and was not published dm.ktu.lt/anketa (in Lithuanian).

The Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) is an initiative of the World Bank that will link decision-makers around the world as participants in global learning activities via telecommunications systems, hence enabling people to learn in their home environments. Twenty distance learning centres are already operating, one hundred centres are expected to be operational within five years. The project for Lithuania was carried out by VTT Information Technology, in 2001. The scope is to assess the readiness and technical level of Lithuania regarding digital technology, virtual knowledge and e-learning in relation with demands for Lithuanian GDLN initiative, and to develop a comprehensive operational strategy for the initiative including a preliminary plan for implementation. Basic data for the evaluation is collected from market studies, information available from the World Bank, Finnish ministries and companies, open statistics and EU sources. More specific information about available infrastructure, technological and digital readiness, virtual knowledge and e-learning, as well as actual country needs is collected via interviews and enquiries to Lithuanian representatives of the government, universities, libraries, public and private ICT sector. The interest among Finnish key actors- like companies providing telecommunication service and infrastructure and media companies- to participate in the implementation phase is evaluated.

The project is commissioned by the World Bank with financial support from the Finnish Ministry for foreign Affairs. The project will be reported in June, 2001.

<http://www.vtt.fi/ttc>

For Citizens

The downturn of prices for using the Internet and hardware/software, their availability speedily change life styles of many people. New services are offered, the existing services are delivered using new methods. Right application of information technologies will allow establishing:

- Better access to the information and services;
- Better delivery of services via different channels;
- Distribution of services according to market demand, namely by responding to the needs of various target groups;
- More efficient reaction to clients notifications concerning the quality and content of services;
- Grouping of services according to life cycles and general events;
- Involvement of users into the restructuring and improvement of services.

Application of information technologies and emerging possibilities to deliver government services via electronic channels opens wide avenues for better services of customers. A necessity to wait in queues and to arrive at a public institution is no longer needed.

This does not require adjusting office hours of various public institutions, as the services are delivered round the clock seven days a week everywhere. Citizens shall have access to services from public institutions at the time and place of their convenience, as all these possibilities are opened via Internet.

For Business

Implementation of e-Government plans will create new possibilities to raise the efficiency of business to government communication. This will increase excommunication between business and governmental institutions via Internet to the extent that all means are available any time without any time waste.

However, these changes will call for new challenges in business world. Information technologies change business environment considerably, sometimes even radically – principles of work organisation, understanding of teamwork and methods of reaching a customer and ways of goods purchasing. A notion of “production” in many cases is also changing.

Implementation of e-Government will increase a demand for services offered on the Internet in Lithuania. The customers will assess their quality of services delivered via Internet and convenience, and they will demand new and better quality from Lithuanian business community offering services on the Internet, new thinking and additional investment. European and American business has already gone through changes like these and has accommodated itself to it to a lesser or greater extent. This can be, however, a difficult challenge for Lithuanian business, though reorientation results will allow to simpler and more efficiently participation on the global markets of goods and services.

For Public Administration

For public administration, e-government is, at present, and will remain a tool for implementation of public administration reform. Its ideological foundation is orientation towards a customer and application of business models in daily work of public

institutions, as this can be efficiently achievable through the use of information technologies.

More transparent public administration, personal responsibility of civil servants, clear cut reporting system, transparent decision making mechanisms – all these are just a few examples of the benefits directly related with administration.

Implementation of e-Government projects will allow public administration to introduce significant structural changes. Administration structure will change better quality services and higher production capacities will be demanded from public servants. The implementation of the projects will try avoiding increase in payment funds for the staff, but would rather be done through the redistribution.

Implementation of the projects will be a great challenge for public administration sector. Inevitable difficulties will emerge in the fields of changing models of decision-making, insufficient skills, and problems of information and communication infrastructure. Public institutions will have to closely co-operate with private sector by creating business models, infrastructure and by providing services to end-users.

No doubt these goals will demand substantial public investment. Project financing will require finding new alternative financial models especially with a view to involve business into co-operation with the public sector.

Public administration sector will need to put lots of efforts to become adjusted to all these changes; however, the results to be achieved will excessively pay off efforts and resources invested.

Quality assurance

Formal distance education programmes now are included in the State Register of Study and Education Programmes by the Minister's of Education and Science directive, after the experts from the Centre of Quality Control for Studies evaluate the registered programmes. But programmes of full-time studies are evaluated virtually. The peculiarities of distance studies (developing teaching materials, tuition and other support), which determine the quality of such programmes are not considered. There are recommendations prepared by the Board of Distance Education in Lithuania in this field:

1. Institutions of higher education should control the quality of distance education programmes using all available tools and funding resources without relying only on the results of competition for a limited number of distance studies places.
2. To charge higher education distance studies consortium with the quality guarantee issues. The consortium could use the funds of its founders-higher education schools and, if they are not enough, funds from the state budget in order to establish a professional system of quality assurance for distance studies and which could be open to other educational institutions to join.
3. To devote a part of state programme of distance studies development for dealing with the issue of quality guarantee.
4. To charge the Centre of Quality for Studies with issues of formal requirements for legal registering of distance studies, considering the specific peculiarities of these studies.

Vilnius DE centre, <http://www.nsc.vu.lt/ang/index.html> and Kaunas DE study centre <http://distance.ktu.lt/> deliver seminars for distance training providers, professors and lecturers together with distance education support centres, such as Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius College of Electronics and Lithuanian Distance Education Centre, Siauliai and Klaipeda University, KTU branch in Panevezys, Utena and Alytus Collegium.