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## **Country Review on the Social Dimension in higher education in Lithuania**

*Annex 2: Background Report*

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# 1 General country information

The Republic of Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic States in Northern Europe. It covers an area of 65.301km<sup>2</sup> bordering Latvia in the north, Belarus to the east and south, where it also borders Poland, Kaliningrad Oblast, a Russian exclave, to the southwest and, overseas to the west, Denmark and Sweden. It was the first of the former Soviet States to restore its sovereignty in 1990. It joined the European Union in 2004 and has been a member of the Schengen area since 2007. The national currency is Litas, 1 EUR= 3.45 LT (ECB).

## 1.1 Population

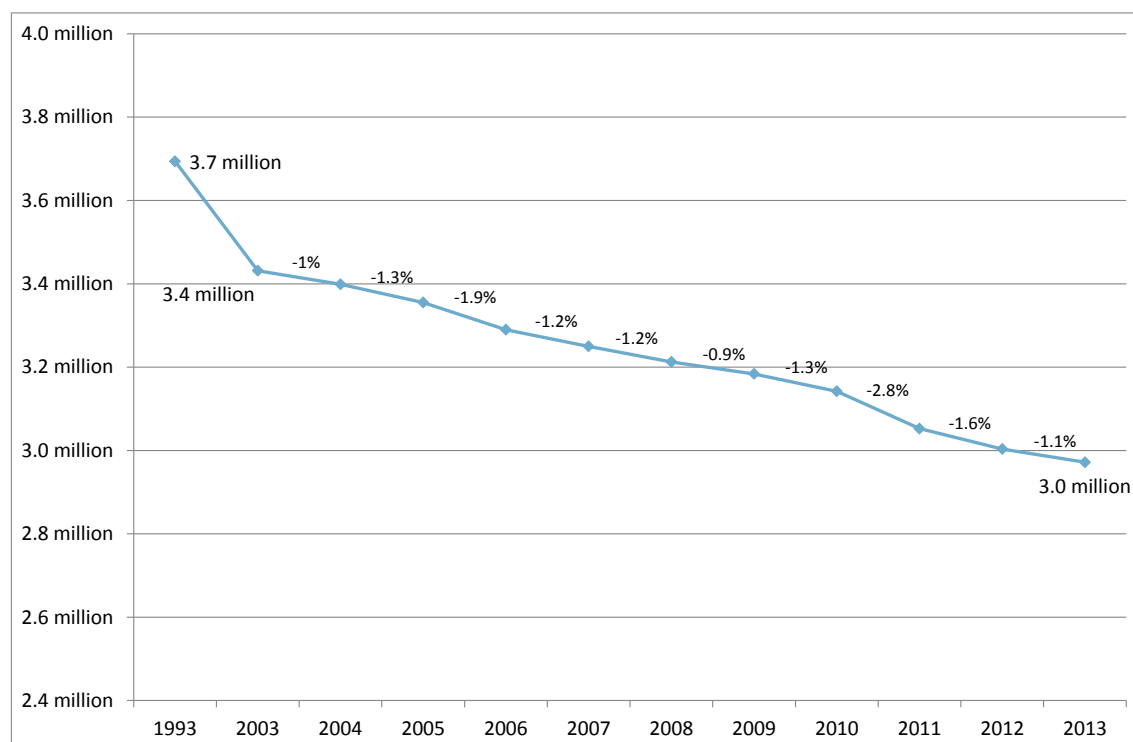
About 3 million people live in Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania), of which about two thirds live in urban areas. This share seems to be independent from age and sex. Almost one fifth of the population lives in the capital: Vilnius. 84% of the people in Lithuania are of Lithuanian ethnicity, 7% are Polish and 6% Russian.<sup>1</sup> However, 99% of the people are Lithuanian citizens and according to the Eurobarometer special survey on *Europeans and their languages* (European Commission 2012), 92% of the population consider Lithuanian to be their mother tongue.

Shortly after Lithuania emancipated itself from the Soviet Union the number of inhabitants started to decrease. Since 1993 the population decreased by 19.5%, with the factor being constantly higher than 1% from 2005 on.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures based on 2011 Population Census, Statistics Lithuania.

<sup>2</sup> Referred to the beginning of the year. Statistics Lithuania, own calculations.

**Figure 1: Population decrease in last decade**

Source: Statistics Lithuania database, own calculations.

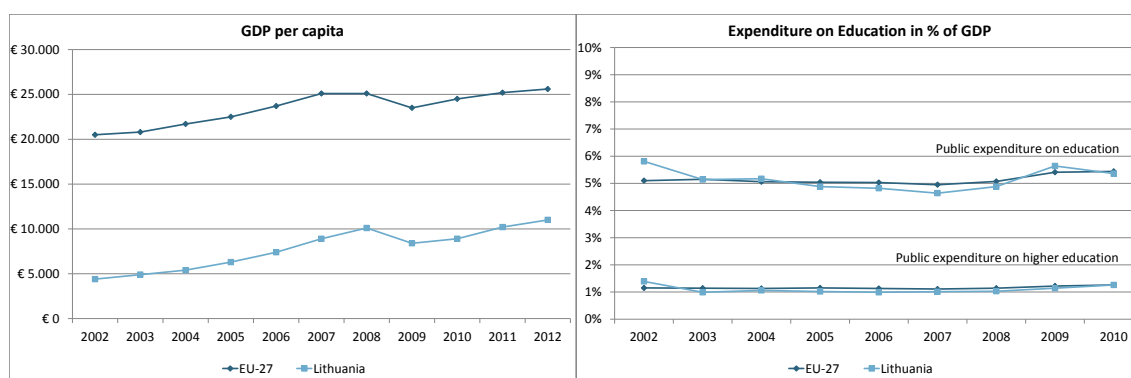
A low fertility rate and high emigration rate have been found responsible for the population decrease not only in Lithuania, but all Baltic States (The Lithuania Tribune, July 10, 2013; Giannakouris 2010). The population in Lithuania is not only decreasing – Eurostat projects a decrease of another 6% between 2013 and 2030 (Eurostat population projection 2013) – but also ageing. In this respect, Lithuania is following a general European trend, though the high emigration rate aggravates the problem, as predominantly people between 20-30 years decide to emigrate (Statistics Lithuania), motivated by high unemployment rates at home and better wages abroad (The Lithuania Tribune July 10, 2013). The majority migrates to the UK (48%), also Ireland (9%), Norway (8%) and Germany (8%) are preferred destinations. As a result, Lithuania is facing a significant brain drain. In fact, a lack of quality in the higher education system has been discussed within the last decade (Daniunas et al. 2013). According to a survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2008, 74% of the republican and international science Olympiads winners were planning to study abroad, because they were assessing the quality of Lithuania’s HEIs weaker than of foreign HEIs (ibid).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The report the authors are referring to is not available online any more. The original source according to Daniunas et al. 2013 is *Disastrous to procrastinate: the state of science and study in Lithuania. (2009). [Delsti pražūtinga: Lietuvos mokslo ir studijų būklė. 2009 m. kovo mėn. LR ŠMM]. Retrieved from <http://www.smm.lt/msr/docs/nepatenkinama%20mokslo%20ir%20studiju%20bukle.pdf> (in Lithuanian)*. In 2012, the science Olympiad of the European Union EUSO took place in Vilnius. Students of

## 1.2 Economic situation

Compared to the European Union's average of 25,600€, the GDP per capita in Lithuania is far lower, amounting about 11,000 € in 2012 (Eurostat database 2014). Among the Baltic States Estonia has a higher value (13,000€). Looking at the long term development Lithuania managed to increase its GDP per capita by the factor 2.5 over the past decade while this indicator only increased by the factor 1.2 in the European Union. Regarding the yearly expenditure for education, Lithuania spent in total 5.3% of the GDP in 2010, where 1.26% was spent on higher education (Eurostat database). The expenditure on education almost reached the goal of 6% established in the higher education strategy between 2008 and 2009. On EU average the expenditure for education is about 5.4% of the GDP, where also 1.26% were spent on higher education. However, according to the latest Public Funding Observatory by EUA the expenditure on higher education follows a decreasing trend since 2009.

**Figure 2: Development of GDP per capita in the last decade**



Source: Eurostat database.

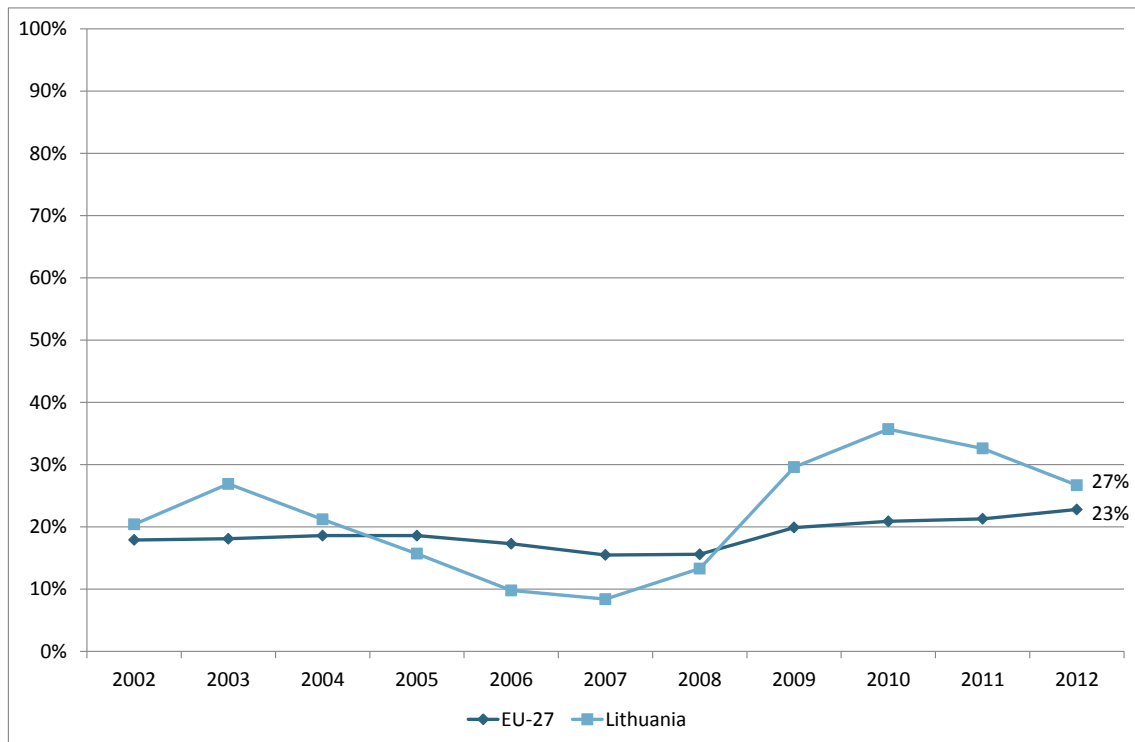
## 1.3 Youth unemployment

Figure 3 clearly shows that the youth unemployment rate increased heavily in the years of 2008-2009, when also the GDP per capita shows a sudden decline. Since Lithuania's accession to the EU in 2004 the youth unemployment rate has been below EU-27 average. Since 2010 it has been declining again and reached 27% in 2012. Considering the period from 2008 until 2012, the unemployment rate among men 15-24 years of age has been higher than that of women. In 2012 the difference was 30% among men vs. 23% among women.

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16 years or younger participate in the competition, in which skills in biology, chemistry and physics are tested. For more information see [www.euso2012.lt/](http://www.euso2012.lt/).

**Figure 3: Youth unemployment in the last decade (population aged 15-24 years)**

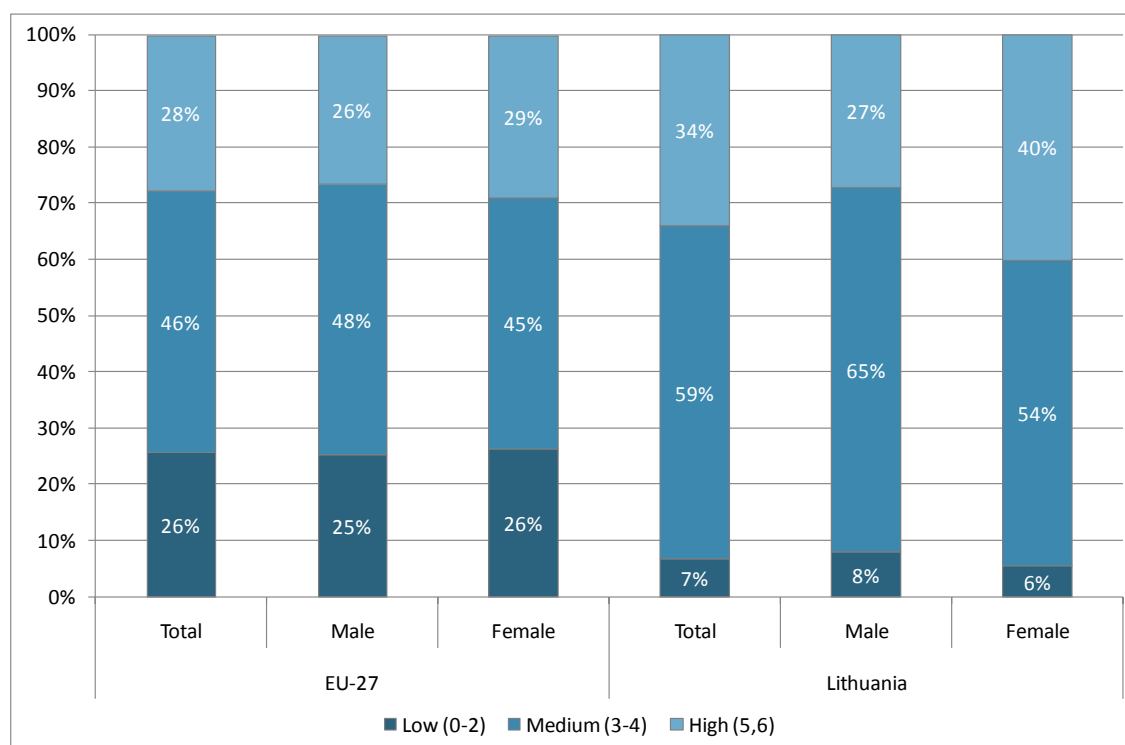


Source: Eurostat database.

## 1.4 Educational attainment

The educational attainment in Lithuania is rather high compared to other European states. According to Statistics Lithuania, about one third of Lithuania’s population between 25 and 64 years has completed higher education. Only 7% have a low educational attainment. That means that 93% of the population has at least attained secondary education. The other Baltic States have a similar educational attainment. On average in the European Union 26% have a low and 28% have a high educational attainment. In Lithuania and the other Baltic States likewise, women have considerably more often attained higher education than men.



**Figure 4: Educational attainment of people aged 25-64 years in Lithuania**

Data for 2012.

Referring to ISCED 97: low education: ISCED 0-2 (completion of compulsory school), medium education: ISCED 3-4 (completion of upper secondary education (3) or upper-secondary non-tertiary education (4)), high education: ISCED 5 and 6 (completion of tertiary education).

Source: Eurostat database.

## 1.5 Political Framework

In the last two decades, Lithuanian Parliament alternated social democratic and conservative leadership with almost every election, though over time the decision for the one or the other turned out to be less and less explicit. In the first parliamentary elections of sovereign Lithuania in 1992, the Social Democratic Party won 44% of the votes. Four years later in 1996, conservative parties won the majority of the votes (Homeland Union 31.3%, Christian Democratic Party 10.4%). The elections in 2000 brought about another swing to the left for Lithuanian parliament with two centre-left oriented parties winning the elections (Braz-SKD, New Union). In 2004, Parliament remained dominated by centre-left parties, though the Labour Party led by a Russian-born business man relegated the formerly leading Social Democratic parties to the second place. In 2008, the Homeland Union (TS-LKD) won the majority of votes being 19.7%, followed by the centre-right National Resurrection Party (TPP) with 15% of the votes. In 2012, forming the current government, parliament shifted to the left anew, with the Labour Party winning the majority of votes (19.8%), followed by the Social Democratic Party (LSDP) as a close second with 18.4%, and the Homeland Union with 15% of the votes (ibid).



## 2 History of the higher education system

Lithuania looks back on a long and turbulent history of higher education that has been subject to several political changes and influence throughout the centuries. Vilnius University was founded in 1579 and is considered the first classical institution of higher education in Eastern Europe (OECD 2002). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under Russian authority, the university was replaced by colleges of theology and medicine. After 10 years, these colleges were removed to leave Lithuania without any higher education institution for three quarters of a century.

In 1918, after independence, the Vilnius University statute was prepared to reopen Vilnius University, when Poland occupied Vilnius. During occupation from 1919 to 1939, a Polish University was situated in the building of Vilnius University with predominantly Polish professors and Polish as the taught language. The Vilnius University statute was then used as a basis for Lithuanian University (later Vytautas Magnus University) in the interim capital Kaunas and became the intellectual centre of inter-war Lithuania.

Vilnius University was re-established in 1939, when Vilnius was re-integrated in the country and first classes were held in 1940. After the Soviet occupation in that year, The Vytautas Magnus University was restructured. Both universities were again closed down under German occupation in 1943.

After World War II, the Soviet occupation continued. The regime restructured both institutions to meet their priorities of economy and military and to confirm them to Soviet policy and ideology. Vytautas Magnus University was closed in 1950, but over time, a number of specialised HEIs were established. Prior to the restoration of independency 12 HEIs were active in Lithuania. Still under occupation, in the spirit of the new openness and democracy of glasnost (OECD 2002), Lithuania established the basics for the legal framework that was enacted immediately after liberation.

### 2.1 Legal and political Framework

Since the re-establishment of sovereignty in Lithuania, higher education has been regulated by the constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law of the Republic of Lithuania Concerning the Approval of the Status of Vilnius University, the Law on Education and the Law on Science and Studies (OECD 2002). The Law on Higher Education adopted in 2000 introduced a reform of higher education, following the guidelines set within the EHEA and the Bologna Process. In accordance with this new law, the binary system dividing higher education institutions in universities and colleges has been introduced. Colleges were established from institutions formerly awarding ISCED 4<sup>4</sup> degrees, if they were found

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<sup>4</sup> For the sake of consistency this report refers to ISCED 1997. For more information see <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx>

qualified for providing non-university higher education. Through passing the Law on Higher Education, the main principles of the Bologna declaration were settled (Daniunas et al. 2013).

In 2009 the new law on Higher Education and Research has been adopted. The main targets of the reform were the education funding system, management of higher education institutes and the improvement of study quality. Especially the latter is hoped to be initialised by competition of higher education institutions to attract the best candidates (Daniunas et al. 2013).

### 2.1.1 Education strategy

The education strategy of Lithuania for the period of 2003 to 2012 followed the draft Education Development Guidelines from 2002. It preliminarily aimed at establishing Lithuania among the Western European states, prioritising knowledge society with particular attention to lifelong learning, secure society and competitive economy. The focus of the strategic provisions is laid on framing the implementation of a vision of education that is supposed to support the development of society in terms of democracy, economy and globalisation. In order to create the required financial conditions, the strategic paper stipulates a yearly expenditure of 6% of the GDP for education.

As a basis for the provisions served the “Long-Term Development Strategy of the State, the Economic Development Strategy, the European Memorandum on Life-Long Learning, the European Employment Strategy, and the Bologna Declaration 1999” (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania 2003, 4). The key aims were (ibid. 5):

- To develop an efficient and consistent education system based on the responsible management, targeted funding and rational use of resources;
- To develop an accessible system of continuing education that guarantees life-long learning and social justice in education;
- To ensure a quality of education which is in line with the needs of an individual living in an open civil society under market economy conditions, and the universal needs of society of the modern world.

Focussing mainly on compulsory or upper secondary education, the education strategy for 2003-2012 emphasises the social dimension of education, envisaging access and continuation of education at all stages. Also favourable study conditions for adults in basic, secondary or tertiary education are addressed. Furthermore, the link between education and “actual life”, which is mainly understood in the context of the labour market, has been aimed to be strengthened. Higher education is mentioned several times in the strategic paper, especially in that regard. Also the accountability of higher education institutions to society was aimed to be strengthened. The accession of Lithuanian higher education to the EHEA is also particularly outlined in the strategy. As a key objective, the strategy emphasises the

possibility of every citizen of Lithuania to pursue higher education, claiming for 60% of Lithuanian youth to acquire university or non-university higher education.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1.2 Implementation of the higher education strategy 2003-2012

In order to achieve the goals defined in the national education strategy, reforms in five areas were introduced: governance, infrastructure, support, content, and staff improvement (Bileviciute et al. 2013). Among other implementation measures a responsible management system has been introduced, providing data on education as a basis for policy. Thus, the higher education system and the quality of studies are being supervised by the Centre of Quality Assessment (SKVC). The most important milestones of changes in the higher education system, that also had a great impact on student numbers, were the implementation of the dual system with the introduction of the Law on Higher Education in 2002. In that reform, the foundation for today's colleges was laid, embracing the ideas and aims of the EHEA. In 2008, major changes in the funding system of higher education were introduced. Before the reform, the government had to set the number of state-funded study places and also a partial funding (50% min.) was possible. With the Law on Higher Education 2008, the state funds were allocated directly to HEIs, who had to determine the number of state-funded places themselves, following general rules of how the price shall be calculated. In 2009, the new law on Higher Education and Research established a very detailed statutory source, further implementing the goals set within the national education strategy being to foster a competitive, autonomous and accountable higher education system. With this reform, the “money-follows-student” principle was further established on the grounds of the funding reform in 2008. According to the regulations established in the Law on Higher Education and Research 2009, the total number of state-funded study places for each field shall be announced by the Ministry of Education and Science. The number of places is at first not fixed per institution, which is the essence of the “money-follows-student” principle. Thus, the state funding is allocated to higher education institutions according to students' choice. The final number of state-funded places as well as their distribution among HEIs has to be approved by the ministry after the institutions announce the results of the admission process. A student is allowed to change a study programme within the same field without losing state funding. This strategy is hoped to foster competition among HEIs in order to attract the best students.

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<sup>5</sup> At <http://www.smm.lt/web/en/legial-information/state-strategy-for-education-2003-2012> the strategy paper can be downloaded.

**Table 1: Major changes implemented in higher education reforms**

<b>Law on Higher Education 2002</b>	Introduction of the dual higher education system (universities + colleges, later universities of applied sciences) <a href="http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=102792&amp;p_tr2=2">http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=102792&amp;p_tr2=2</a>
<b>Law on Higher Education 2008</b>	Allocation of state budgetary funds to HEIs and regulation of determination of study costs. Minimum number of students fixed by government, actual number of places defined by HEI. Adjustment of distribution between universities and colleges, with major impact on student numbers <a href="http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=331400&amp;p_tr2=2">http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=331400&amp;p_tr2=2</a>
<b>Law on Higher Education and Research 2009<sup>6</sup></b>	Further implementation of deregulation, accountability and autonomy of HEIs, detailed regulation of management and monitoring structures, implementation of „money follows student“-principle (i.e. allocation of funding to higher education institutions in accordance with student’s choice of field and the number of state-funded places per field fixed by the government) <a href="http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=366717&amp;p_tr2=2">http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=366717&amp;p_tr2=2</a>

### 2.1.3 Underrepresented Groups

Lithuanian legislation has identified underrepresented groups, subjecting them to several measures undertaken in order to foster their participation (mostly funding measures). Students from low education background, students with disabilities and orphans are targeted by support measures (see section 3.2.2). During the research of this report, no evidence could be found that also other groups have been identified within Lithuanian legislation, e.g. students with children or migrants/ ethnic minorities. According to experts, students from lower-educated families, students with disabilities and young parents are especially underrepresented groups in higher education (MOSTA 2013b).

<sup>6</sup> Latest amendment of Law on Higher Education and Research 2012:  
[http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_e?p\\_id=438419&p\\_tr2=2](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_e?p_id=438419&p_tr2=2)

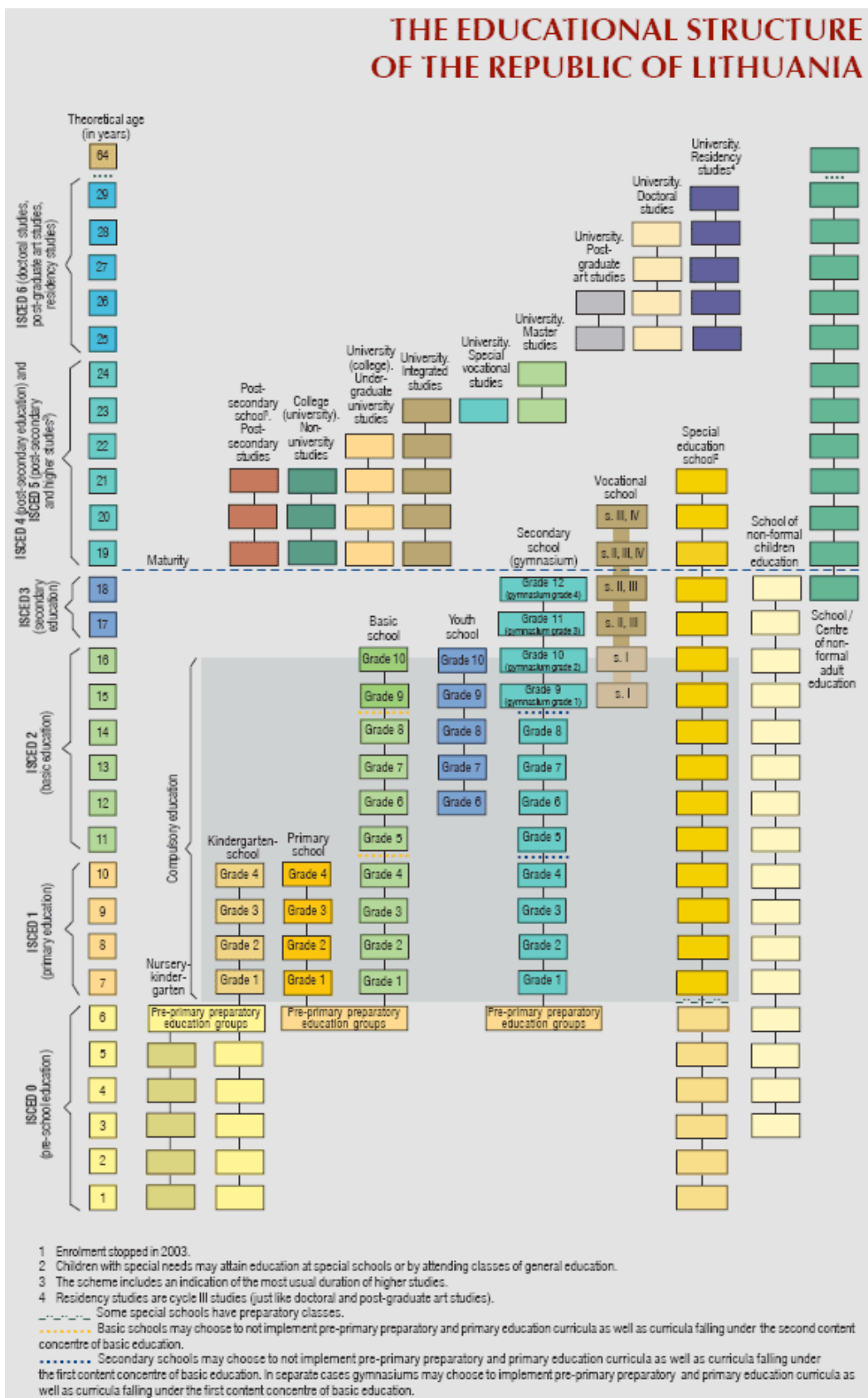
## 3 Organisation of Lithuanian (higher) education

### 3.1 Before entry to higher education

In Lithuania, compulsory education starts from the age of seven and is compulsory up to the age of 16 years. Primary education (Pradinė Mokykla, ISCED 1) is attained by pupils aged 7-10 years and after completion followed by a six-year basic education curriculum of lower secondary education (Pagrindinė Mokykla, ISCED 2). The last two years of lower secondary education can be attained in vocational schools (Profesinė Mokykla, ISCED 2). Lower secondary (i.e. compulsory) school is completed at the age of 16. Upper secondary school lasts two years and can either be attained in academic track schools (Vidurinė Mokykla or Gimnazija, ISCED 3) or vocational schools (Profesinė Mokykla, ISCED 3). A higher education qualification can be obtained after completion of upper secondary education in both branches (general and vocational) at the age of 18.

There are several different school types in Lithuania. **Primary school** only offers primary education up to the age of 10 years. **Basic school** can be attained from the age of 10 years. It offers compulsory education until the age of 16. To complete compulsory education either school type that offers secondary education can be attained. **Secondary school** can be attained until 10<sup>th</sup> grade, which finishes compulsory education with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of gymnasium (either Pagrindinė Mokykla or Gimnazija), or until 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Gimnazija), after completion of which a higher education qualification can be obtained. Gimnazija might offer all grades of primary and secondary education (ISCED 1- ISCED 3). **Youth schools** (Jaunimo Mokykla) offer education from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and targets pupils that lack motivation or cannot adapt themselves to learning conditions in comprehensive schools (UNESCO 2007). Grade 9-12 can be attained in **vocational schools** (Profesinė Mokykla). In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade also the general curriculum offers elective vocational education modules. Those vocational modules are accredited, if upper secondary education is followed within a vocational curriculum. Vocational schools formerly offered upper secondary, non-tertiary education (ISCED 4), which also obliged a secondary school-leaving certificate. These schools were converted into colleges during the educational reform in 2000. The last students that gained an ISCED 4 certificate graduated in 2007 (SKCV 2014). Since then, Professional Bachelor degrees are awarded in colleges. Although most of them call themselves universities of applied sciences, colleges only award non-university degrees (Professional Bachelor Degrees).

Apart from that, there are also institutions that specialised in education of pupils with special needs. These schools offer pre-primary education and general education and students can be enrolled there up to the age of 21.



Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational schools only awarded ISCED 4 degrees until 2007.

Source: UNESCO World data on Education (2007).



There is a ranking of the best *gimnazija* and secondary schools done by a Lithuanian Magazine called Veidas, which was done the 10<sup>th</sup> time in 2013. The evaluation is based on the number of school graduates who entered a university of their first choice (The Lithuania Tribune, April 1, 2013).

98% of all pupils enrolled in lower secondary education attain the general track – only 2% are enrolled in vocational lower secondary education (which can only be attained from 9<sup>th</sup> grade). In upper secondary education the share of pupils attaining the vocational track is 28%.

Looking at the sex distribution in the different types and stages of secondary education, it becomes clear that it is skewed – vocational education is mainly attained by males. In lower secondary education, 76% of the enrolled students are males, in upper secondary education the share of males is still 65%. In contrast, the sex distribution in lower secondary education reflects the sex distribution of the whole population in the respective age groups (10-15 years, Eurostat database).

**Table 2: Enrolment in secondary education by sex**

		Males	Females
Lower secondary	General	52%	48%
	Vocational	76%	24%
Upper Secondary	General	48%	52%
	Vocational	65%	35%

*Beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

### Higher education qualification

Completion of upper secondary education and passing the exam to qualify for higher education do not necessarily coincide. Students who completed secondary education without passing the final exam are issued a certificate attesting their learning achievements. Both in vocational and general upper secondary education a secondary school-leaving certificate can be obtained. Also after completion of adult secondary education or the programme of the National School of Art a higher education entrance qualification certificate can be obtained. For access to higher education a higher education entrance qualification certificate obtained after completion of general or vocational upper secondary education is obligatory. Holding that certificate, students have a guaranteed right to study a chosen study programme (Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012, Law on Higher education and Research 2009).

The maturity award is called *Brandos atestatas*. The test in Lithuanian language can be passed on school level or on state/national level, other subjects can either be school or national

level.<sup>7</sup> Within the last decade, the requirements of subjects that must be passed has decreased. While before 2001 pupils had to pass 5 examinations, there are only 2 examinations (Lithuanian and 1 elective) required since 2010 (SKVC 2013). The learning outcomes of the *Brandos atestatas* are referred to in the admission process coordinated by LAMA BPO. Except for Arts and Sports, all study fields require four maturity exams. The exam in Lithuanian language accounts for 20% and the first subject for 40% of the competitive score needed for admission. Results of two additional exams passed within the *Brandos atestatas* or from annual assessments of grades account for 20% each. The latter do not necessarily coincide, as for maturity itself only Lithuanian plus one subject is obligatory. For Arts and Sports additional entrance exams/assessment of achievements is considered (LAMA BPO 2014).

Referring to a study on socio-economic indicators in higher education policy (MOSTA 2013a), it is assumed that upper secondary education institutions lack incentives to undertake measures or initiatives to promote higher education. In the study the necessity of institutional empowerment and support is emphasised in order to foster integrative access paths into higher education.

75% of graduates of upper secondary schools and 11% of graduates of vocational schools enrol in post-secondary education (referring to 2012). 40% of general school graduates enrol in Universities to pursue academic higher education and 26% go to colleges to pursue professional tertiary education. 8% enrol in post-secondary vocational schools, which are not considered higher education. Of those who continue education after graduation from upper secondary vocational education, almost all continue education in these vocational schools. The post-secondary non-tertiary education system is not part of this report, though it is obviously an important option for graduates of vocational schools. This issue should be addressed during the site visit in order to clarify whether certain groups that are underrepresented in higher education make use of these alternatives (above all: men).

**Table 3: Continuation of studies after graduation from upper secondary schools**

Continuation of studies in...	General	Vocational
...University	41%	0.3%
...College	26%	0.7%
...Vocational School	8%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>11%</b>

*Data for 2012.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

<sup>7</sup> State level: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Foreign languages (English, French, Russian, German), Geography (offered only as school-level in 2010-2011).

School level: Native language (Belorussian, Polish, Russian, German), Arts, Music, Musicology, Technologies.

Looking at the transition to higher education from the other way round, college students striving for a Professional Bachelor have about three times as often graduated from a vocational school than university students (5% vs. 1.5%). Students who completed upper secondary education in a foreign country study far more often at a university than at a college.

**Table 4: Student distribution by type of prior education**

Graduated from...	University students (BA)	College students
...General school	84%	94%
...Vocational school	1.5%	5%
...School in foreign country	5%	0.4%
...Post-Secondary education <sup>1)</sup>	9%	0.9%

Data for 2012.

<sup>1)</sup> Including Professional colleges (post-secondary, non-tertiary), colleges and universities.

Source: Statistics Lithuania database.

## 3.2 At entry to higher education

After graduation from secondary school, a student can choose between college education, which may be academic (universities) or non-academic (colleges) education. The ministerial website [www.studyinlithuania.lt](http://www.studyinlithuania.lt) provides sound information in Lithuanian, Russian and English on institutions, programmes (including entry requirements) and cost as well as on the application procedure and on funding opportunities.

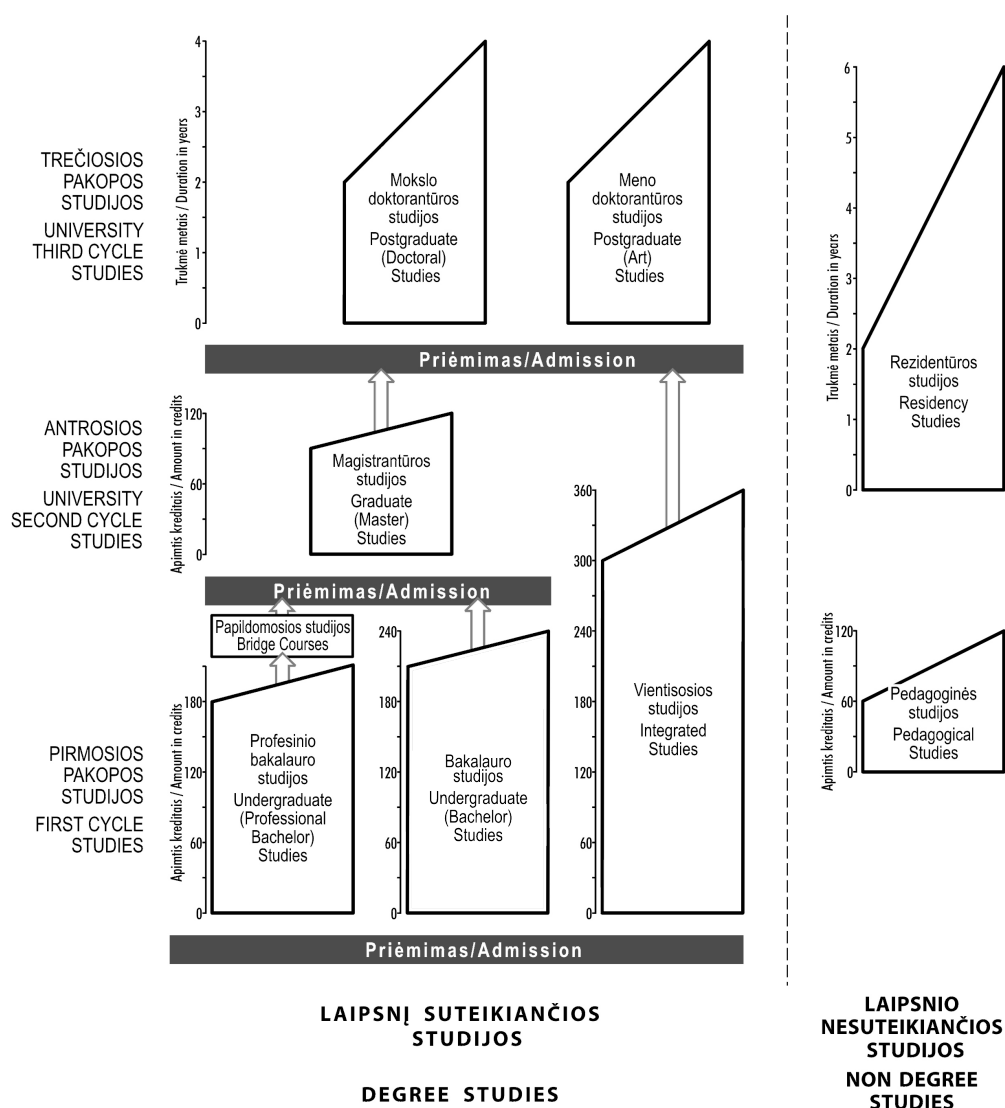
The current dual system of higher education was introduced in 2000. Before that, universities were the only institutions to offer tertiary education. In context of the higher education reform, vocational schools that were sufficiently qualified to provide non-university higher education were converted to or became part of colleges (as institutes). Some colleges continued to award post-secondary non-tertiary degrees until 2007. Between 2000 and 2007 college graduates were awarded a Diploma of higher education, indicating the gained qualification (e.g. manager, physiotherapist). Since 2007, college graduates are awarded Professional Bachelor's degrees (SKVC 2014).

Non-university *kolegija* offer only non-academic Professional Bachelor programmes, although they often refer to themselves as Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS).<sup>8</sup> Usually, the professional degree also indicates the field in which profession will be studied for (e.g. Law Professional Bachelor, Management Professional Bachelor). There are 24 institutions of this kind, 13 of which are state colleges and 9 are private. Professional Bachelor programmes aim at the preparation for a certain profession or applied research. This degree does not qualify for a Master programme, as these only exist in the academic track. If a student wishes to enrol in a Master programme after obtaining a Professional Bachelor's degree, he or she must undertake bridging courses or prove sufficient professional experience in order to be admitted.

<sup>8</sup> According to ISCED 97 this qualification is classified as 5B.

There are 23 Universities, 14 of which are state Universities and 9 are private. These offer academic higher education including Bachelor, Master and doctoral programmes as well as integrated programmes, which comprise Bachelor’s and Master’s degree (for regulated professions like law, medicine) and prepare for doctoral studies. Both types of higher education institutions offer non degree studies for specialised professional training.

## LIETUVOS AUKŠTOJO MOKSLO SISTEMA LITHUANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM



Source: SKVC – Center for quality assessment in higher education 2014.

In general, a graduation certificate from secondary education is required for entrance to higher education. As stated above, applicants have to apply for study places at LAMA BPO. The joint admission procedure established by the government is used by all institutions for admission to 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes.<sup>9</sup> It consists of three stages. In the general admission form an applicant can mention up to twelve different study programmes and rank them by preferences. All applicants compete for state-funded and privately funded places on the basis of their learning achievements in school (*Brandos atestatai*) or beyond (learning contests like scientific Olympiads etc.). For each of the preferences, eligibility for funding is calculated. The minimum required competitive score is not fixed ex ante but depends on the scores of all applicants (LAMA BPO 2014). In the first stage of the admission procedure a student is offered either a state-financed or a self-financed study place by the higher education institution. If the applicant accepts the offered place, the order of chosen subjects can be adjusted (Daniunas et al. 2013).

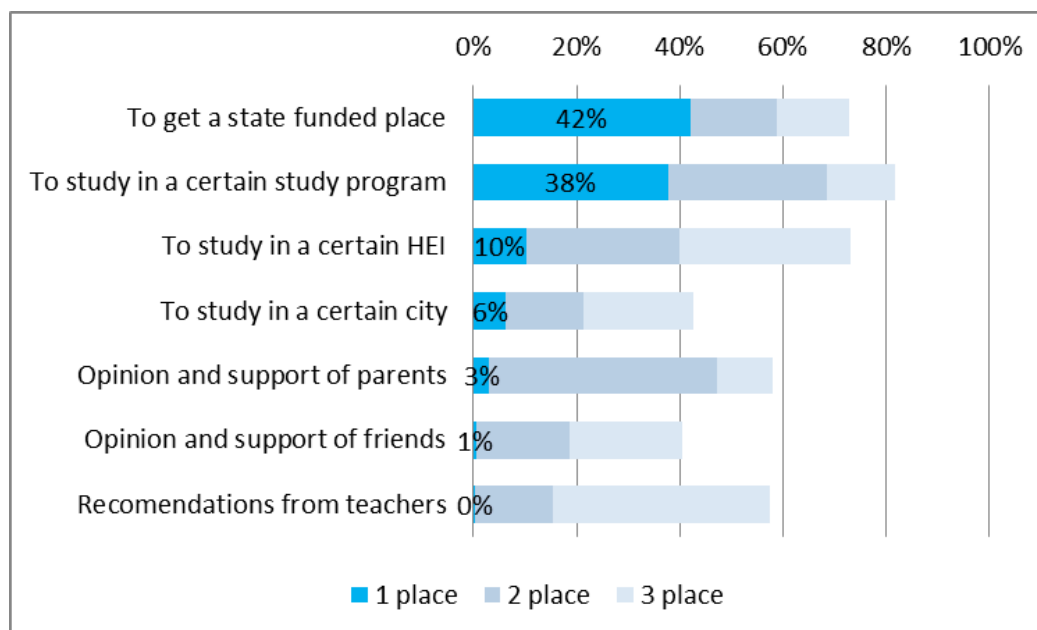
Hence, admission to higher education is competitive, taking secondary school achievements, entrance examination (for certain fields) and other criteria, established by each institution itself, into account. According to the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012, either a school leaving certificate (used by approx. 85% of students), a vocational education certificate (used by approx. 10% of students) or a higher education diploma (used by approx. 10% of students) is needed to enter higher education. For adults, there is the possibility to obtain non-formal adult education, which can be used as a partial fulfilment of a higher education study programme, though higher education institutions are not legally obliged to accredit non-formal education. In fact, it is only standard practice in 5-35% of higher education institutions and a charge for the recognition service is made (ibid.).

MOSTA has analysed what determines students' decision of field of study – see Figure 5. They found that 42% of potential students rate aiming for a state-funded study place as most important criteria for their choice. The study programme is close second being rated as most important criteria by 38% of pupils in their last year of secondary education. In contrast, the choice of institution or study location is less important for students' choice of what to study. The question remains open on how many students apply for higher education and are not admitted or do not accept the places offered to them and for what reasons.

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<sup>9</sup> The admission to second cycle programmes is regulated by each HEI itself.

**Figure 5: What is the most important criteria for making a decision of where and what to study? Please rank three most important criteria.**



Source: Representative survey of students in their last year of secondary school in Lithuania, N=1170, MOSTA, 2014.

Admittance is organised by LAMA BPO, who also monitor the number of applicants and admissions. Table 5 shows a sudden decline in the number of applicants and admissions between 2012 and 2013. Between 2010 and 2013 also the share of students that successfully passed the application procedure and got admitted declined slightly.

**Table 5: Number of applicants and number of admitted students over time**

	Number of applicants	Number of admitted students	Share of admitted students
<b>2010</b>	35,283	30,138	85%
<b>2011</b>	37,902	31,308	83%
<b>2012</b>	38,476	29,923	78%
<b>2013</b>	35,492	27,810	78%

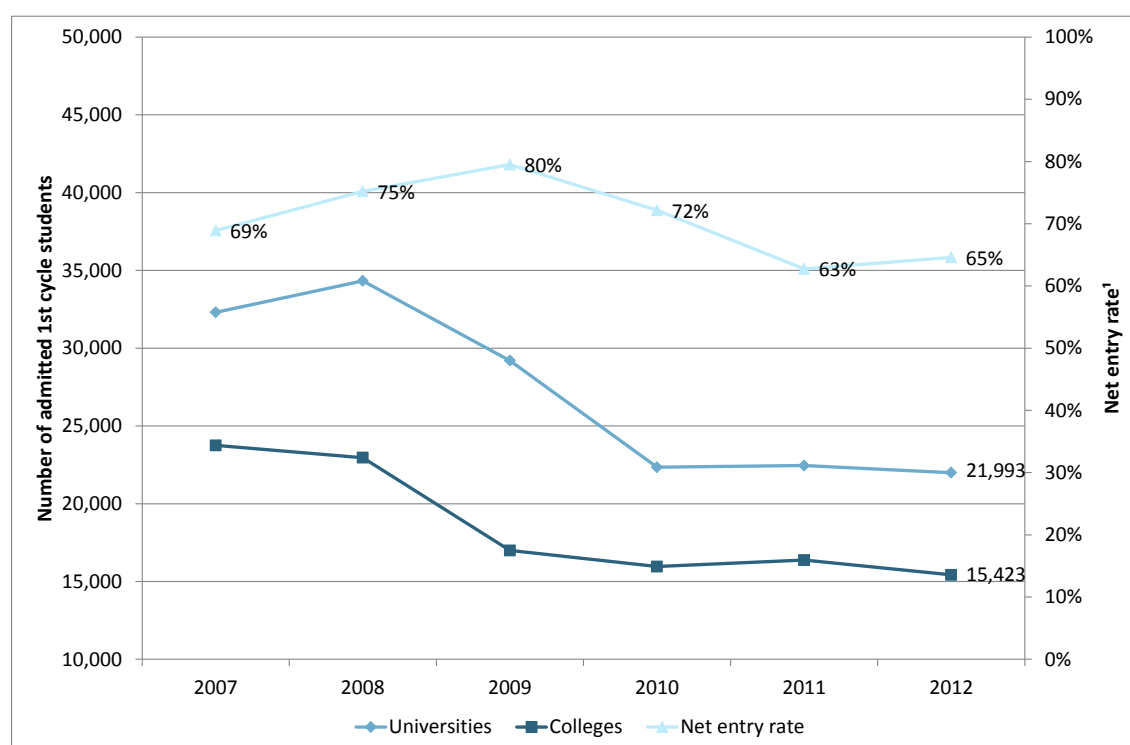
Calculations by MOSTA.

Source: LAMA BPO.

Some students may enter higher education directly at the institution and do not pass the admission procedure organized by LAMA BPO. Thus, the actual total number of newly admitted is reported by Statistics Lithuania in the report on Education 2013 (Statistics Lithuania 2014). In 2012/13 nearly 31,592 students were admitted to their first year, 18,075 to universities and 13,517 to colleges. At universities, 43% of newly admitted students got a free study place, 0.7% were granted a study scholarship. Thus, 56% had to pay tuition fees. 50% of students admitted to colleges for the first time got a free study place and 3% were granted a study scholarship. The share of fee paying students is hence lower among college beginners than among university beginners.

For viewing the development of new enrolments over time, Statistics Lithuania only provides data on all admissions (i.e. not only first-time admissions). Nevertheless, these data give an idea of how the access figures developed. In the academic year 2012/13, over 37.000 students were admitted to first cycle programmes in higher education, about 60% of which enrolled in university and 40% in college. As Figure 6 shows, the number of newly admitted students decreased dramatically between 2008 and 2010 – by 35% at universities and by 30% at colleges. Moreover, Figure 6 shows not only a decline in absolute student numbers but also in the net entry rate. Nevertheless, in 2012 65% of the students from the approximate cohort (18-21 years) were admitted to a 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programme at either university or college (Eurostat database).<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 6: Number of students admitted to Bachelor programmes at Universities and Colleges**



*Including students that did not enter higher education for the first time.*

<sup>1</sup> Share of newly admitted 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students from sliding average of the number of persons aged 18-21 of the respective year. This net entry rate is not able to take account of migration effects.

Source: Statistics Lithuania database.

Daniunas et al. (2013) state the reform to have affected the number of state-funded places very differently at different institutions. Between 2008 and 2011, the decline ranges from 3% (though it had a major downturn of over 60% in 2010) at Lithuanian University of

<sup>10</sup> The net entry rate of students was calculated following the “Best-4”-principle. The number of newly admitted students to 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes at universities or colleges aged 18-21 years as share of the total population of the corresponding age.

Health Sciences (LSMU) to 78% at Siauliai University (SU). The relation between state-funded and self-funded study places is discussed in section 3.2.1.

**Figure 7: Number of state-funded study places in Lithuanian universities**

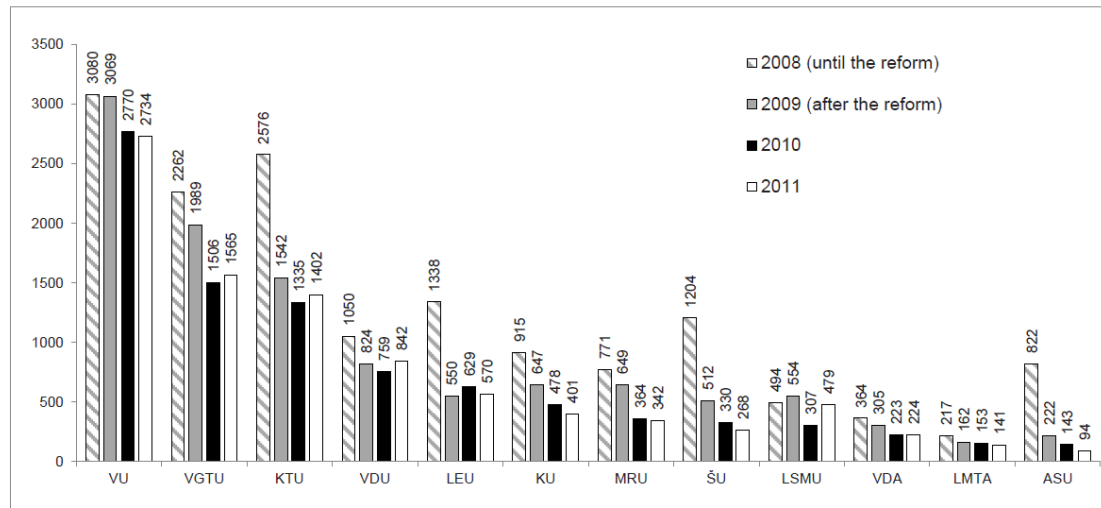


Figure 1. Distribution of state-funded student places in Lithuanian universities in 2009-2011

(VU – Vilnius University; VGTU – Vilnius Gediminas Technical University; KTU – Kaunas University of Technology; VDU – Vytautas Magnus University; LEU – Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences; KU – Klaipėda University; ŠU – Šiauliai University; LSMU – Lithuanian University of Health Sciences; VDA – Vilnius Academy of Arts; LMTA – Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre; ASU – Aleksandras Stulginskis University)

*LSMU: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences; KMU: Kaunas University of Medicine, part of LSMU. Probably LSMU displays LSMU excl. Veterinary [free interpretation].*

*MRU: Mykolas Romeris University.*

*Source: Daniunas et al. (2013), 568.*

### 3.2.1 Study costs

The Law on Higher Education and Research (2009) regulates the procedure for the specification of tuition fees or the cost of a study place respectively. The normative cost is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science on a yearly basis, but fixed by each HEI itself. Funding is allocated to the higher education institutions, establishing a minimum number of students. According to the normative cost established by the ministry, the lowest cost is set for study fields of humanities (except for philology) and social sciences (except for psychology, education, public security) while the highest cost is set for pilot training programmes and music (Repeckaite 2013). In sum, technology studies at universities and colleges received the highest share of the budget. At colleges it amounts to 44% of the total allocated budget, at universities, Technologies consume one third of the total budget dedicated for state-funded places.

As Table 6 shows, also the state budget dedicated to state scholarships to cover tuition fees for admitted students with the best grades, is allocated very differently to different fields of study. For the university sector, the share of 82% of study scholarships allocated to social sciences is remarkably high, especially regarding the normative cost of a study place, which is lowest for social sciences.



**Table 6: State funding for the university and college sector in 2014**

		State-funded places		Study scholarships	
University	Humanities	1,740	1%	18	7%
	Arts	1,496	9%		
	Social Sciences	3,304	19%	202	82%
	Natural Sciences	2,708	16%	27	11%
	Biomedical Sciences	2,779	16%		
	Technological Sciences	5,300	31%		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17,327</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>
College	Humanities	114	1%	6	1%
	Arts	461	5%	81	17%
	Social Sciences	2,103	22%	266	55%
	Natural Sciences	294	3%	28	6%
	Biomedical Sciences	2,373	25%	24	5%
	Technological Sciences	4,256	44%	80	16%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9,601</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100%</b>

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle studies.

Figures in thousands of LTL.

Source: Lithuanian Government 2014.

As a Lithuanian or EU-/EEA citizen, one may apply for a state-funded study place. Students from outside the EU/ EEA have to fund their studies in Lithuania independently. On average, the study cost for Bachelor studies lie between 1,000€ and 5,300€ per year and between 2,200€ and 6,500€ per year for Master studies respectively.<sup>11</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> cycle students in state-funded study places might lose their funding if the merit after the first two years of study (respectively 50% of part-time studies) is more than 20% less than the average results of students in a respective study programme in the respective year. In that case the tuition fee fixed by the HEI has to be paid. The re-allocation of that place follows a rotation principle, electing a fee-paying student with the best results. State-funded students are allowed to change their study programme within the same study area, without losing the remaining part of funding of the studies (Law on Higher Education and Research 2009).

About 40% of all students admitted to 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes at universities in 2012/13 were admitted to state-funded study places. At college the share of students admitted to state-funded places was 51% (Statistics Lithuania). In the phase where the number of state-funded study places declined the most (2008-2010), also the number of students declined the most. At university, the number almost remained the same in the subsequent years. The

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.studyinlithuania.lt/en/how\\_to\\_apply/tuitionfees](http://www.studyinlithuania.lt/en/how_to_apply/tuitionfees)

number of state-funded students decreased a little more than the number of self-funded students, which even increased a bit between 2011 and 2012. At colleges, the decline was considerably different between state-funded students and self-financed students. While the number of state-funded study places declined by only 10% from 9,395 in 2008 to 8,438 in 2010 and 7,921 in 2012, the number of newly admitted self-financed students decreased by 45% from 13,564 in 2008 to 7,520 in 2010 and has not increased since then.

**Table 7: Decline in number of newly admitted students by source of financing**

		2008-2010	2008-2013
University	state-funded	-39%	-44%
	self-financed	-32%	-30%
College	state-funded	-10%	-16%
	self-financed	-45%	-45%

*Only 1st cycle students.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

Experts hold the higher education reform more accountable for the decline than socio-demographic factors or the recession, as the decline is far greater than observed in the population in this period (2% between 2008 and 2010, Statistics Lithuania). In 2007 the political parties of Lithuanian parliament agreed, that in order to ensure adequate access, competitiveness with European institutions and efficiency of the higher education system, higher education needed an ambitious reform, which came into effect in an amendment of the Law on Higher Education in 2008 and was further established in the Law on Higher Education and Research 2009.

As a major part of the reform, higher education funding has been changed. Before, students with the top grades were eligible to at least partially (min. 50%) state-funded study places, irrespective of the field of study. Each year, the Government had to determine the number of students admitted to a higher education institution, whose study costs should be covered (Law on higher education 2006). After the reform, funding was directly allocated to higher education institutions, under the agreement of establishing a minimum number of students to build a higher education institution. Hence, higher education institutions got to offer a limited number of state-funded study places, according to the cost of a study place, determined by the institution itself (Law on Higher Education 2008). For certain fields of study a “Student basket” system was introduced, allocating additional funding to fields where a very high number of students goes in order to create conditions for competition between institutions and fields of study (Agreement of political parties 2007). This reform actually was introduced in 2009, with the adoption of the Law on Higher Education and Research. According to experts, this reform caused a decline in the number of students and restricted opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged groups, strongest in Arts, Biomedical fields and Technics (MOSTA 2013a). The authors conclude that the new funding system caused a gap between fee-paying students and state-funded students to grow and indicates possible discrimination. The much stronger decrease of the number of newly

admitted self-financed college students indicates a presumably lower social background of students heading towards college.

Table 7 shows that the share of state-funded study places in relation to self-financed places decreased at universities, but increased at colleges. According to Daniunas et al. (2013), it was one of the goals of the reforms in 2008 to adjust study places between universities and colleges.

**Table 8: Share of state-funded study places at admission**

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
<b>University</b>	52%	45%	39%	43%	42%	40%
<b>College</b>	42%	41%	55%	53%	53%	51%

*Only 1st cycle students.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

From the perspective of the social dimension, it is important to look at the distribution of the state-financed study places by social background. This is possible with the latest Eurostudent V data. Table 8 shows that the share of state-funded study places is about two-thirds for both students from low and high social backgrounds (as measured by their parents' highest educational attainment)<sup>12</sup> – this means that students from both social backgrounds appear to have the same chances at obtaining a state-funded study place.

**Table 9: Share of study places by funding method and social background**

	High social background	Low social background
<b>State-funded</b>	65%	66%
<b>Fee-paying</b>	36%	34%

*Only 1st cycle students. Social background: parents' highest educational attainment high = ISCED 5-8; low = ISCED 0-4.*

*Source: Eurostudent V, special analysis.*

A further analysis of the same data, however, shows that the chances of obtaining a state-funded study place at a university are lower for students from low social backgrounds than for students from high social backgrounds – whilst 59% of students from low social backgrounds obtain a state-funded study place at a university, 68% of students from high social backgrounds do. The opposite is true for state-funded places at a college – whilst 71% of students from low social backgrounds obtain a state-funded study place at a college, 61% of students from high social backgrounds do. This suggests that there is a social bias in the chances of obtaining a state-funded study place by sector.

According to Eurostudent IV, student's income in Lithuania is among the lowest in Europe, while their study costs are among the highest (absolute numbers compared to other countries). According to a study on the situation of students in Lithuania by MOSTA

<sup>12</sup> The share of students responding to this question on state-funded places was over-proportional.

(2013b), the ratio between fee costs and income for fee-paying students in the first cycle of studies was 58% among university students and 47% among college students (ibid). The experts from MOSTA thus see a relation between access to higher education and financial issues, but they consider the problem to be more complex. According to an analyst from MOSTA who has been cited by The Lithuania Tribune, the chances of accessing university and also of successfully completing it, also depend on the educational attainment of parents and the health status and ‘family status’ of the students (The Lithuania Tribune, May22, 2013) in terms of family values regarding education. Their analysis showed that in contrast to that, the parents’ financial situation and social status has a smaller impact on access to and success in higher education (see also Chapter 3.3).

### 3.2.2 Student support

According to legal documents, the Republic of Lithuania defines students with low socio-economic background, orphans and students with disabilities as underrepresented groups (Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012). Under the condition of being Lithuanian or EU/ EEA citizen, students holding a self-financed study place may apply for state support as grants/ scholarships or state supported loans.

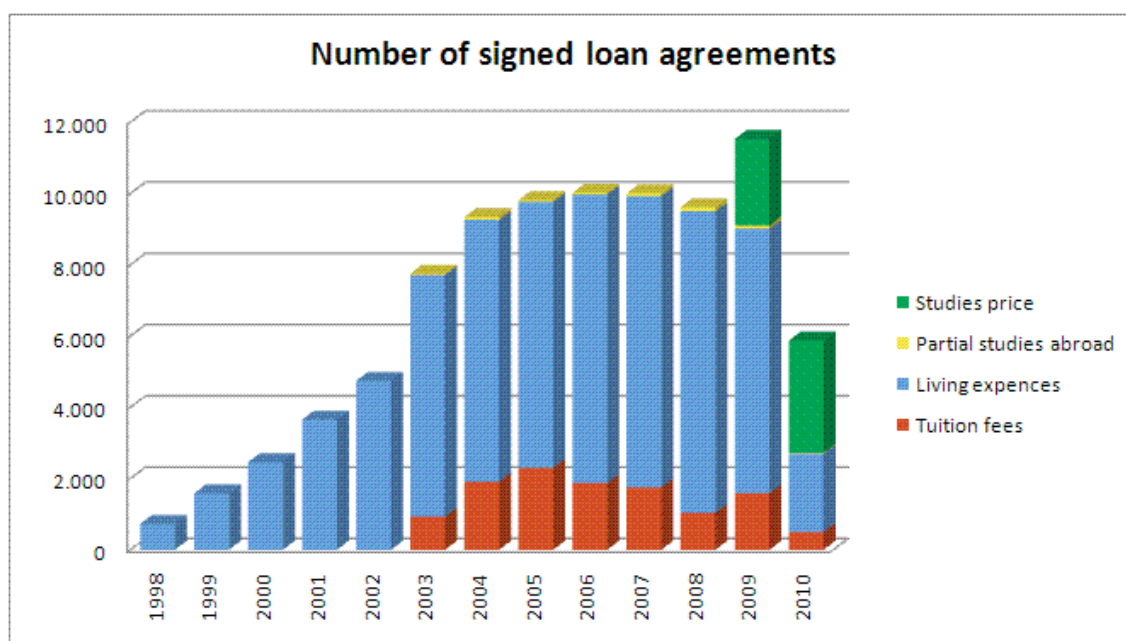
Student support is restricted to either students who are eligible in terms of socio-economic background, disability or custody in first and second cycle programmes. Besides that, 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students with the best results compared to the mean achievement of students at the same stage in a respective period and have passed the first two years of a full-time study programme or half of a part-time study programme, can apply for an incentive grant, reimbursing the tuition fee partially or totally (ibid).

As far as student loans are concerned, all students of all cycles are eligible. State-supported loans may be granted for covering tuition fees (depending on the cost of the respective programme), covering living expenses (max. 1,880 € p.a.) and for period of study abroad (Erasmus, max. 2,260€ p.a.). Loans are granted by national credit institutes but eligibility is determined by the State Studies Foundation<sup>13</sup> (Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012). Between 1998 and 2009 the number of students with loan agreements rose steadily – see chart. However, still in 2008 only around 3% of students took out loans. During their studies, students only have to pay interests. Repayment starts one year after graduation and has to be completed within 15 years. For loans to cover tuition fees, the state covers any interest exceeding 5%. However, all students (also those whose loan is not supported by the state) can apply for the state to pay their interest, which is granted by priority to (descending) socio-economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, orphans, students taking loans for studying abroad, students taking loans to cover tuition fees, and students taking loans to cover living costs. The allowance of interest payment also depends on the study cycle, form of studies and merit (ibid.).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.vsf.lt/en>, budgetary institution administering financial support for students.

Just after the funding reform in 2008, the number of loans to cover the price of studies raised remarkably. Following this, in 2009 the loan system was adapted. Loans may now be sought by students with a state guarantee, but the interest rate changes along with market conditions (Eurydice 2013, Eurypedia); the decentral nature of this agreement means that it cannot be shown in the chart below.

**Figure 8: Number of students who took out loans over time**



Source: State studies foundation, <https://www.vsf.lt/en/statistics>, accessed on March 6, 2014. Change to loan scheme in 2009, so that new loan agreements are not included.

For students' parents (or other family members who have paid the fee) it is also possible to receive income tax refund up to 15% of the paid tuition fee, when the student receives the first degree. The allowance is restricted by the parents' income and the age of the student. Also students themselves are eligible to tax refund, as long as they are enrolled in full-time programmes.

Apart from scholarships and loans there is also the possibility to benefit from subsidies in health insurance and domestic travel cost. Eligibility is given for full-time students with Lithuanian or EU/ EEA citizenship. Fulfilling these restrictions, a student may receive a 50% discount on single tickets for distance travelling or local (suburban) tickets (single or fixed term tickets) and for the usage of urban regular transport 80% reduction for fixed term tickets and 50% for single tickets. According to the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012, non-cash support is also available to part-time students.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> From the Bologna implementation report it did not become clear, whether the subsidies on travel costs are only granted for travelling to university or generally.

For this report, only little sources for detailed data on how many students receive support could be found. According to the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2009-2012, 26% of first cycle students and 31% of second cycle students receive a grant or scholarship. 3% of students in either first or second cycle programmes take out loans.

In sum, the student support – although it has increased over time – appears to remain problematic. The new Eurostudent V data show that students in Lithuania are concerned about their financial situation, with 41% stating that they have serious or very serious difficulties with their financial situation; of those students on fee-paying places 53% they have serious or very serious difficulties with their financial situation (special analysis by MO-STA).

### 3.3 Study framework and student body

The study programmes in Lithuania are generally organised according to the Bologna Architecture. A first cycle university programme (Bachelor) comprises at least 210 and not more than 240 ECTS credit points. In first cycle college studies (Professional Bachelor) at least 180 but not more than 210 ECTS credits are awarded. Second cycle programmes (Master) comprise 90-120 ECTS credits and require a university Bachelor degree that satisfies the requirements set by the university for admission. Holding a Professional Bachelor's degree, permission to Master studies is only possible if minimum requirements, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, are met. The required qualification can be obtained in bridging courses or through accreditation of professional experience.<sup>15</sup> Integrated programmes comprise first and second cycle programmes and award a Master's degree upon completion. They generally apply to regulated professions such as law or medicine and may only be organised when this is established in legal acts. The scope constitutes 300-360 ECTS points. Apart from doctoral studies<sup>16</sup> there are non-degree third cycle programmes called (Medical) Residency. Those programmes aim at physicians seeking to acquire a professional qualification of a medical practitioner.

Studies can be of continual or extended form. Continual studies have a regular volume of 60 credits per year, whereas studies of an extended form shall not exceed 45 credits per year and must not last more than one and a half times longer than studies of continual form (Law on higher Education and Research 2009), i.e. continual studies are the same to full-time studies, whilst extended programmes are the same as part-time studies. In total, the number of credits awarded in a programme must be equal for both forms.

At the beginning of the academic year 2012/13 there were 157,350 students enrolled in higher education, out of which 111,665 in universities and 45,685 in colleges.<sup>17</sup> In total, 28% of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students are enrolled in extended courses, or in other words: studying part-

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.studyinlithuania.lt/en/educationsystem>

<sup>16</sup> Doctoral studies will only marginally be subject to this report, as PhD students are treated differently in terms of the curriculum and their status as a student compared to BA and MA students.

<sup>17</sup> Excluding approx. 2,700 Doctoral students.

time. Among college students, the share of part-time students amounts to 38%. Considering that among college students there are many who obtained vocational education prior to higher education, it is likely that those students study besides working more often than university students.

**Table 10: Enrolment in higher education and status of programme**

		Total number of students	Regular programme	Extended programme
University	Bachelor	7,8561	75%	25%
	Integrated	8,694	95%	5%
	Master	21,952	69%	31%
	Univ. Total	109,207	75%	25%
College		45,685	63%	38%
Total 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle		132,940	72%	28%

*Beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

*Excluding students in non-degree programmes.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

Students at universities and colleges choose very different fields of study. At university, half of the students study subjects in four different areas: Business and administration (18%), Social sciences (14%), Law (10%) and Teaching/ pedagogics (10%). At colleges, half of the students concentrate in only two fields of study: Business and administration (39%) and Engineering (14%). Health care (10%) is ranked third among college students, all other fields are studied by less than 6% of students each. This corresponds with the fields most studied for in secondary vocational education (cf. Chapter 3.1). Apart from the fact, that universities offer a broader range of fields, the distribution of students is generally more diverse.

**Table 11: Field of study**

	University students (1 <sup>st</sup> cycle)	College students
Business and administration	18%	39%
Social and behavioural sciences	14%	0%
Law	10%	5%
Training of teachers and pedagogy	10%	4%
Engineering and engineering professions	9%	14%
Health care	7%	10%
Humanities	6%	0.7%
Architecture and construction	5%	6%
Fine arts	4%	4%
Computer sciences	3%	1.3%
Journalism and information	2%	0.2%
Exact sciences	2%	0%
Social services	2%	4%
Mathematics and statistics	1.4%	0%
Environment protection	1.3%	1.1%
Nature sciences	1.3%	0%
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	1.1%	3%
Veterinary	0.7%	0.4%
Manufacture and processing	0.7%	3%
Services for individuals	0.4%	2%
Transportation services	0.2%	3%
Security services	0.2%	0%

*Beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

*Ranking according to shares of students at university. Classification according to ISCED.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

## Sex

The sex distribution of the population aged 20-29 years is 51% males and 49% females. In higher education, females are overrepresented among 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students at universities and colleges. However, they are in fact considerably overrepresented among Master students. This goes along with the higher educational attainment of women in general. Among doctorate students the gender gap narrows a bit, but females remain overrepresented in comparison to the total population.

**Table 12: Sex distribution of students**

		Males	Females
University	Bachelor	42%	58%
	Master	34%	66%
College		45%	55%
Total 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle		43%	57%

*Beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

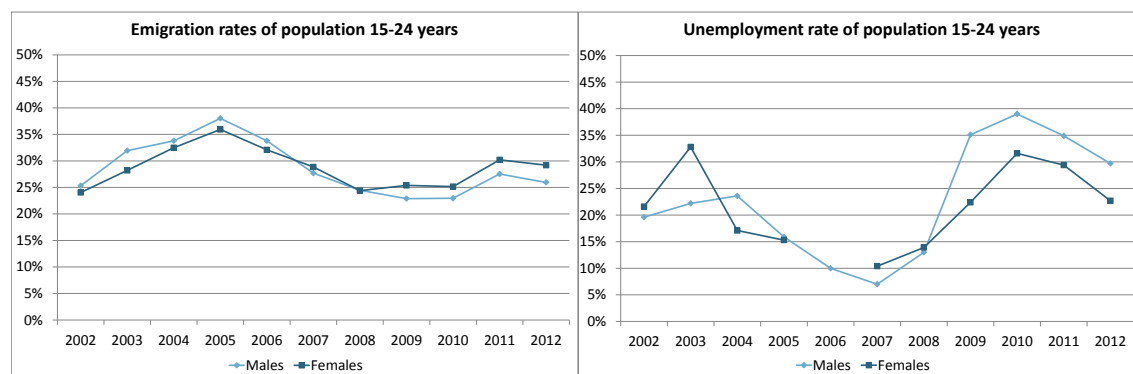
*Excluding students in non-degree programmes.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*



The question remains open of what males do instead of studying. According to emigration statistics, males at the age of 15-24 years do not emigrate considerably more often than women of the respective age. There is though a higher unemployment rate among males of that age that since 2008 lies constantly over women's unemployment rate. However, these data can only give a hint for the clarification of why men are underrepresented in higher education.

**Figure 9: Emigration and unemployment rates for population 15-24 years by sex**



*No data on youth unemployment for women in 2006.*

*Source: Eurostat database.*

### Age distribution

Both among university students and college students, the vast majority is younger than 25 years. Compared to university students, college students are on average a little younger. The difference is though considerably small, regarding the fact that colleges only offer Professional Bachelor programmes, unlike universities which offer also Master and PhD programmes, being attained by older students.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 13: Age distribution of students by higher education sector**

	University students	College students
<b>Up to 19 years</b>	13%	17%
<b>20-24 years</b>	59%	62%
<b>25-29 years</b>	16%	10%
<b>30 years or older</b>	12%	10%

*Beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

Therefore, two assumptions can be conducted:

- The majority of students enrol in higher education directly after graduation from secondary school.

<sup>18</sup> Data is only available for all students, not in distinction between type of study programme. Therefore the data includes PhD students and supposedly also non-degree students (as they are in other tables dealt as university students).

- After completion of a Bachelor programme, those who continue education, enrol in a Master programme directly after graduation from a Bachelor programme.

Eurostudent IV data soundly supports these findings. 81% of students (excl. PhD) neither interrupted their education career between graduation from secondary and entering tertiary education for the first time, nor between graduation of higher education and re-entering higher education. In fact, only 3% of students did not pass directly from Bachelor to Master (Eurostudent database [www.eurostudent.eu](http://www.eurostudent.eu)).

Table 14 shows a considerable age difference between students who study full-time and those who study part-time. While the vast majority of full-time students is up to 24 years old and only 4% are 25 years or older, part-time students are considerably older. The reason for this is supposedly twofold: it is assumable that students who study part-time are in a different living situation because of their higher age, which forces them to study less. At the same time, as part-time studies regularly last 1.5 times longer than full-time studies, students finish their studies at a higher age. This assumption is also supported by the highest share of part-time students in the age group of 20-24 years.

**Table 14: Age distribution of students by study intensity**

	Full-time students	Part-time students
<b>Up to 19 years</b>	23%	1%
<b>20-24 years</b>	73%	54%
<b>25-29 years</b>	3%	29%
<b>30 years or older</b>	1%	16%

*Academic year 2012/13.*

*Calculations from MOSTA 2014.*

*Source: Students register.*

### Educational background

As discussed in chapter 3.1, most graduates from general upper secondary education continue their studies in higher education. Of those who graduated from a vocational school less than 1 out of 10 graduates enrol for higher education. As stated before, access to higher education is highly determined by the educational attainment of student's parents. Considering the situation in many other European countries, assumingly also in Lithuania young people from lower education background choose a vocational education more often. This choice however does not lead into higher education very often.

Looking at the distribution of the educational background of students compared to the educational attainment of their parent's generation, access barriers become evident. While 75% of student's fathers have tertiary education background (vocational or academic), it is only 20% of men in the parental generation (men aged 45-64 years). Moreover, it appears that the fathers' educational attainment has greater influence than the mothers', although women in general have a higher educational attainment than men. While student's fathers completed higher education 3.7 times as often than men in the parental generation, stu-

dents' mothers completed tertiary education 3 times as often as women in the parental generation.

**Table 15: Educational attainment of student's parents compared to parental generation**

	Students'		Parental generation	
	Fathers	Mothers	Men	Women
<b>Up to lower secondary</b>	4%	2%	9%	9%
<b>Upper secondary/ non tertiary</b>	21%	15%	71%	63%
<b>Tertiary</b>	75%	83%	20%	28%

*Data for 2009.*

*Parental generation: men and women aged 45-64 years.*

*Limited comparability of Eurostudent data according to national contributors.*

*Source: Eurostudent database, Eurostat database.*

### Students with disabilities

The number of students with disabilities has constantly been increasing in the last decade. Between 2004/05 and 2011/12 it increased by 2.5 times (Mosta 2013b: 102) up to 819 students, 57% of which studying at universities. In the academic year 2012-13, 979 students with disabilities were enrolled in higher education (Statistics Lithuania). The Lithuanian student union (LSS) conducted a survey among all higher education institutions in 2011-2012. They found a number of 878 students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities represent less than 1% of the student population, while in the total population people with disabilities represent about 10.5% (ibid). According to the authors, students with disabilities are already underrepresented among secondary education graduates.

No evidence could show that for applicants with disabilities might apply different conditions in the application process. The conclusion that follows is that these students have to make the same efforts and compete in the same categories of secondary education achievements as students with no disabilities. As discussed above, there is financial support targeting students with disabilities. Within the research for this report, no information about institutional or informal support addressing these students' special needs could be gathered. At the site visit, this topic should be issued.

## 3.4 Graduation and transition

In 2012, nearly 20,300 Bachelor students and 8,500 Master students graduated at University. Additionally, 382 doctorate degrees were awarded. About 12,700 students graduated from college in that year. The gender differences are noteworthy, especially when the sex distribution among students is taken into account. Among Bachelor students 42% are male, among graduates the share of males is only 37%. The same holds true for college students. However, the distribution among Master students and graduates is about the same. Conceivable explanations are either, that male Bachelor students have a higher drop-out rate

than females, or that women show a better study performance than men and can therefore complete their studies in a shorter period of time.

**Table 16: Number of graduates from higher education and sex distribution**

		Total number of graduates	Male	Female
University	Bachelor	20,276	37%	63%
	Master	8,462	33%	67%
	Univ. Total	28,738	36%	64%
College		12,698	36%	64%

*Data for 2012*

*Source: Statistics Lithuania database.*

### 3.4.1 Student assistance

The majority of higher education institutions have established career centres, where information, trainings and support are provided. As an example, the Career Center of Vilnius University was set up in 2003 and is supported by over 100 companies, institutions and organisations. It offers lectures, seminars and consultations for students and employers aiming at assisting students in their career choice and in developing their abilities. Youth labour centres established in cities and districts provide similar services. Different projects financed from the EU structural funds aim at developing students' competences of entrepreneurship and organise practical placements in business companies. In 2010 a packet of proposals for reducing youth unemployment has been approved, providing more possibilities for people starting work and small business. It also foresees a wage reimbursement for people younger than 29 years under certain conditions (Eurypedia). While youth unemployment (15-24 years) was increasing in the years before 2010 until it reached a share of 36%, it has decreased down to 27% in 2012. Within the scope of this report, no evidence about the impact of the reform could be found.

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