

# Lithuania

## Demographics for Lithuania

Population:	3,596,617 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$45.23 billion
Currency (inc code):	Litas (LTL)
Language(s):	Lithuanian (official), Russian, Polish, others
Internet country code:	.lt

## Primary and secondary education

General education is obtained in schools following primary (one-four grades), lower secondary (five-ten grades) and secondary (11-12 grades) educational programs. A child typically starts primary education when he or she turns six or seven. Pre-school education is provided to children from the age of one to six and is not compulsory. Nurseries, kindergartens and kindergarten-schools implement a one-year program of pre-primary education accessible to everybody and provided for children between five and six.

According to Lithuanian education law, primary and lower secondary education is compulsory.

Secondary education takes place in gymnasiums, the international baccalaureate school and vocational schools.

Gymnasiums have a four-year curriculum and admit applicants who have completed eight grades in a general school.

The international baccalaureate school offers a two-year curriculum of secondary education. The school admits applicants who have completed the second school year in a gymnasium.

Secondary school students in grades 11 and 12 (forms three and four in gymnasiums respectively) choose to pursue humanities or science curricula. Other pathways are also possible: a technological curriculum is available in vocational schools as well as in technological gymnasiums and art curricula are available in art gymnasiums.

### **Higher education**

Enrolment to higher education institutions is done on a competitive basis and all applicants must have completed general secondary education. Rules of enrollment are set by the higher education institution as confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

There are two types of higher education institutions in Lithuanian universities and colleges. These may be state or non-state. In 2004 there were 48 institutions providing higher education in Lithuania. Of them, 21 were providing university studies and 27 non-university study programs.

University studies are organized in three cycles: a first cycle of undergraduate studies lasting three and a half to four years; a second cycle of Master's or specialized professional studies lasting one-and-a-half to two years; and a third cycle consisting of a residency, doctoral studies or postgraduate art studies lasting from three to four years.

The first cycle of university studies is aimed at expanding one's general education, providing knowledge and skills necessary for starting a professional activity and teaching an individual to think creatively. Programs include general theoretical, special theoretical and practical subject modules. A Bachelor academic degree is awarded after completing these studies.

The second cycle of studies is aimed at preparing students for careers in science or arts or for careers requiring scientific knowledge and skills. Studies in Master's programs are based on theoretical and special subject modules and interdisciplinary modules. A Master academic degree or art licentiate is awarded after completing these studies.

Integrated studies are offered when splitting the studies into two cycles is not expedient (medicine, odontology, pharmacy, etc.).

The third cycle of studies aims at preparing researchers (doctoral studies), art teachers or artists (postgraduate art studies) and doctors, odontologists and veterinary surgeons (residency). After completing a thesis, students are awarded a Doctor's degree.

Non-university studies have only one cycle (undergraduate) professional studies intended for the preparation for professional activity. Only professional qualifications can be awarded upon completing non-university undergraduate and specialized professional programs.

Most institutions start their academic year in September. An academic year is divided into two semesters: autumn and spring. Each semester usually covers 16 weeks. Four additional weeks are allocated to examination sessions.

The accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out by the the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment (LCQA) in higher education, which coordinates research/development and the pedagogical activity of higher education institutions. It organizes expert assessment (peer review), accumulates and publishes information about the quality of that activity and offers suggestions about its improvement.

### **Business and management education**

A wide range of organizations provide business and management education in Lithuania. Only accredited universities and colleges provide business and management education that leads to a degree at any level. Study programs within universities and colleges are typically managed and delivered by an academic unit often referred to as a faculty of management, department of management or business school. Non-degree management education, such as training programs for corporate managers and employees as well as short management programs focused on particular issues are mainly provided by private consulting companies, consulting units of corporations and business associations. Only few universities and colleges provide such services, primarily private universities. Private universities focus mainly on creating and delivering larger executive leadership development programs.

University and non-university undergraduate programs in business and management, delivered both at the universities and colleges, differ significantly. Typically, university programs involve two years of general studies and two years of specialized studies in business management and administration. The students are able to select a number of different courses in the area of their chosen emphasis in business. The officially offered degree title is Bachelor of Management and Business Administration, but some institutions offer other titles such as Bachelor of Management, Bachelor of Business, etc. Differences in degree titles do not necessarily mean differences in curriculum.

A Bachelor's program is completed after the defense of a Bachelor thesis in front of a committee, comprised of specialists from the management area, mostly from the same institution.

Universities and colleges both have the right to deliver non-university undergraduate (professional) programs, which are intended as preparation for professional activity. The successful completion of those programs leads only to professional qualifications. The professional qualification is awarded after passing the final examination or/and defending the final project. The Bachelor degree is not awarded after graduation from these studies.

Master's level business and management education in Lithuania is delivered at the universities according to Lithuanian education law. Colleges do not have a right to conduct Master's level studies. The duration of studies varies from institution to institution, but is generally one and a half to two years. The official degree title offered is Master of Management and Business Administration, but titles may vary (Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of International Management, Master of Marketing, etc.). Usually this variation signals curriculum differences. Programs may focus either on a general business curriculum or on a specific specialized business field.

In order to receive a Master's degree upon completion of the study program, the student must defend a the Master's thesis before a committee of experts in the field. Most of these may be from the same institution, but representatives from business or from other educational institutions may also be invited.

The MBA degree is not yet officially recognized in Lithuania. However, many universities are delivering Master's level programs based on typical MBA curriculum.

Master's level programs are delivered in different modes full-time or part-time (evening, weekend or extramural). The majority of Master's programs in business and management may be called full-time but in reality they are delivered on a part-time (evening) basis because the majority of the Master's level students are working full-time and are not able to attend daytime programs.

A Master's degree or university Diploma of Integrated studies (combining two study cycles) is required in order to be admitted to the doctoral studies in management. Candidates are preferred if they can show evidence of publication of research papers in reputable academic journals.

After the applicant is admitted to the doctoral studies program, a Committee of Doctoral studies, established by the Senate of the particular university and consisting of at least five specialists in the area of business and management approves the appointment of a supervisor for the doctoral student.

All Doctoral courses finish with an examination. There must be a minimum of two examiners, one of whom may have been a tutor or a lecturer on the taught course. The student's supervisor may also be an examiner. After successfully completing the courses, selecting a dissertation topic and having the research design and proposal accepted by their supervisor, the doctoral student concentrates on writing the thesis. Doctoral studies last up to four years.

Doctoral candidates defend their dissertation in front of the Council of Scientific Directions of the university after it is completed and has been recommended for defense. The Council includes well-known specialists from other research and higher education institutions. The defense is public, its time and place announced in advance in the media. The degree – Doctor of Management and Administration – is awarded in the case of successful defense.

Because Lithuanian business and management education is no more than 15 years old, finding experienced and research oriented faculty in business and management is still a big issue. There is a limited number of young faculty holding PhDs in management. Many young doctors leave academia and go for a business career. Some contribute to universities on a part-time basis. Universities and colleges employ practitioners from business part-time to teach one or two courses. A number of PhDs from related academic disciplines, such as economics, psychology, law, sociology, as well as mathematics and sciences also work in the business management education field.

Generally full-time tenure-track faculty in universities are expected to conduct research, teach, and provide service to the institution and discipline. In contrast, colleges demand that faculty focus more on teaching and services, and less on research.

Business and management studies is one of the most popular disciplines in Lithuania. In 2004 there were about 51,000 students studying business and management in all levels of higher education in Lithuania, which represent almost 27 percent of the whole student body; 69 percent of these were women.

All institutions of higher education in Lithuania in 2004 awarded degrees or professional qualifications in MBA to the 9,156 graduates, which is almost 28 percent of all graduates that year.

The efficiency and level of research and education activities of higher education institutions providing business and management education in Lithuania is assessed by the LCQA in higher education, which also provides recommendations for improvement. The quality assessment includes new study programs, about to be launched, as well as existing programs. In 2005, the LCQA in higher education finished the accreditation of all existing business and management programs at higher education institutions in Lithuania.

The same Centre is performing quality assessment in other study fields too. There is no separate accreditation body, focusing exclusively on business and management education:

- Estimated number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 36.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Master's degree programs: 14.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Doctoral degree programs: 5.

### **Issues facing business schools**

There are a variety of issues facing higher education institutions providing business and management education in Lithuania. One of them is the financing system for higher education, which supports public institutions of higher

education and excludes non-state universities and business schools from any state financial support. This situation does not encourage competition between state and non-state institutions and does not promote better quality of services. It also puts a heavy financial burden on students at private universities and colleges. The situation is even more serious because the study loan system, financed from the state budget, provides only limited resources. The access to these resources for students of private institutions is also limited. This creates an issue of accessibility to higher education as well as one of the possibility freely to choose which educational institution to attend.

Policies to motivate business to support higher education are still being developed. Legislation was only passed in the Parliament of Lithuania in summer 2005 to encourage corporations to send their employees to the degree programs by creating favourable tax conditions. That will have a positive influence on business schools. However, there is no formal (tax) motivation for corporations to donate money to the business education institutions for program development, scholarships, and facilities improvement.

The limited financial resources for management education make it difficult to keep the best faculty in the universities and colleges. Very often they leave to go into industry or to start their own consulting businesses. The limited production of business and management doctorates does not satisfy the needs of the growing number of business students. The shortage of doctoral faculty makes it challenging to keep a research based approach in management education. Solving this challenge with the help of foreign faculty raises the issue of internationalization for universities and colleges in Lithuania.

Only a few institutions of higher education provide full business programs in English, enabling them to invite foreign students to study and foreign faculty to teach on these programs. This is because most institutions lack the financial resources to pay expensive foreign faculty, who would increase the quality of such programs and make them more attractive to the external market. The mainly local faculty, even if experienced, is not able to assure a sufficiently international spirit for business programs, and cannot support an increase in the quality of services provided, especially for the international market.

The quality requirements for higher education programs were developed when university education was the only possible route to higher education. Because of that, the requirements were set up for purely academic programs, paying less attention to competence development, which is important for the business community. University education is often therefore perceived by business as very academic and hardly applicable to business realities. That does not encourage good relationships between the business community and management education institutions. Business schools implementing MBA-type programs must balance the academic requirements more relevant for Master of

Science-type programs and the market demands more often reflected in typical MBA curricula.

There is no clear correlation and coordination between study programs at the colleges and universities. Coursework completed by graduates of colleges is typically not transferable to universities. The graduates of three or four-year college programs must start from the first year at the university system in order to continue further education. The only exception would be if a particular college and university made an agreement to co-operate, which led to the possibility of the graduate of the college continuing in the second or third course of undergraduate studies at the university.

**Virginijus Kundrotas**

*ISM University of Management and Economics*

**Sources**

Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Lithuania, 2004.

Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2004.

Study in Lithuania, 2004, Vilnius, ISBN 9955-548-13-4.

