

## 1. Legal Environment of Higher Education in Lithuania

There is a number of laws and regulations concerning the **system of education in Lithuania**. The main of them are as follows: The Law On Education, The General Concept Of Education In Lithuania, The Law On Vocational Education And Training, The Law On Non-Formal Adult Education, Law On Special Education, etc.

**The basics of Higher education** are set by the Law on Higher Education, adopted in 2000 that replaced the previous Law on research and Higher Education (1991). The new law legislated the binary system of higher education, public supervision and care bodies Boards of Higher studies, etc.

**Quality assurance.** Ensuring the quality of studies is a major goal in higher education. The Lithuanian Centre For Quality Assessment In Higher Education, among other things, evaluates the efficiency and level (compared with the international level) of institutions and provides recommendations for improvement. The Centre coordinates the regular self-assessment of institutions, organizes expert (external) assessment of this activity.

## 2. System of Higher Education

### 2.1. Organizations

Higher education comprises university-level courses offered by universities, and academies. The sector of non-university higher education was established in 2000 following the passing of the Law on Higher Education.

College	A higher education establishment with an emphasis on non-university studies, applied research and (or) applied scientific activities or professional art.
Universities	A higher education establishment delivering predominantly university education, engaged in scientific research, offering Masters-level and Doctoral programs and (or) promoting high-level professional artistic activity or offering a Doctoral program in the field of Art.

On September 1, 2000, Lithuania had 19 universities (4 of them non-state). The first non-university higher education institutions with the name of Kolegija (4 public and 3 non-state) were established on the basis of the former Aukštesniosios mokyklos (vocational colleges). Over the period of 2001 and 2002, established were 11 public and 6 non-state non-university higher education institutions. At the beginning of 2002/03, there were 15 public and 9 non-state non-university higher education institutions (*data of Statistics Department of Lithuanian Republic*).

### 2.2. Admission to studies

The upper secondary leaving certificate (brandos atestatas) is required by all higher education establishments. Admission to studies takes place on a competitive basis. The usual admission criterion is a competition rating determined by the grades of some subjects, the number of which is usually no more than four, the results of school leaving examinations as well as marks of entrance examinations held by higher education

institutions. At non-university level education admission is based on selection on the basis of the results of upper secondary school leaving examinations. Non-university higher education institutions may lay down specific institutional admission requirements.

### **2.3. Higher education programs and qualifications**

I stage: basic studies. Programmes at the first level encompass general theory, speciality theory and practical subject modules. Speciality theory and practical subject modules help to establish the direction of studies. Upon completion of basic studies (lasting four to five years), a bachelor's degree or a professional qualification is awarded. Graduates from basic studies can follow specialized professional programmes or studies leading to a master's degree (eighteen months to two years of study).

II stage: specialized professional or master's degree studies. Master's programmes involve more in-depth theory and speciality subject modules as well as interdisciplinary courses. The main characteristics of master's studies are individualised programmes based on courses freely chosen. Studies last from eighteen months to two years. Specialized professional programmes lead to professional qualifications, e.g. certified engineer. Upon completion of professional studies a professional qualification is awarded; upon completion of master's studies, a master's degree is awarded.

III stage: the doctorate is usually awarded after the candidate has already obtained a master's degree, a professional qualification or an equivalent certificate. A doctorate takes no more than three/four years. Higher education and research institutions can jointly organize doctoral studies. Upon completion of the courses, a doctoral thesis must be prepared and publicly defended in order to qualify for the doctorate.

Requirements for accession to university programs are as follows:

<b>Stage of study</b>	<b>Requirements for accession</b>	<b>Exceptions</b>
I. Bachelor	The upper secondary leaving certificate (brandos atestatas)	NO
II.A. Certified engineer	A bachelor's diploma	NO
II.B. Master	A bachelor's diploma or a professional qualification certificate.	NO
III. Doctor	A master's diploma	NO

## **3. Reforms in the Field of Higher Education**

The reform of Higher Education was carried out up till 2001. The following reforms should be mentioned:

- The legal base of the system of HE was changed: in 1991 the new Law of Higher Education was adopted; main tendencies and priorities of change towards contemporary higher education were outlined.
- The legal base of the system of HE was redefined: in 2000 the new edition of the Law of Higher Education was adopted: main reforms and achievements were legally accepted and new priorities set.

- Non-state establishments of HE emerged in 1999.
- A dual study system of higher education HE was established in 2000; universities and colleges in Lithuania provide higher education.
- A three-stage study system of HE education was established in Lithuania.
- A proportion of resources for the studies, research and other services provided by institutions of HE increased in budget of institutions.
- The model of governance was changed from a centralised to a more decentralised one, bodies of self-governance function.
- Studies are being internationalised: included into study programmes of EC;
- A credit system was introduced;
- A system of evaluation and accreditation of institutions and programmes is being established.

Therefore several crucial reforms were introduced in Lithuanian higher education; the process of reforms continues. HE has become available to almost everyone seeking higher education, it is provided by the number of institutions and a variety of study forms are offered; highly qualified teachers provide education. However, several lines remain to be followed in the reform: harmonisation of study programmes, accreditation and acknowledgement procedures, involvement of socially deprived groups and other.

#### **List of References:**

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